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A  
**MEASURING REED;**  
TO  
**SEPARATE BETWEEN**  
THE  
**PRECIOUS AND THE VILE.**

*IN TWO PARTS.*

**PART I.**

**SHewing WHAT ARE NO CERTAIN SIGNS OF A  
RENEWED OR GRACIOUS STATE.**

**PART II.**

**SHewing WHAT ARE DISTINGUISHING SIGNS OF  
A TRULY RENEWED AND GRACIOUS STATE.**

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**BY THEOPHILUS R. GATES.**

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And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not, . . . . . Rev. xi. 1, 2.

If thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth, Jer. xv. 19.

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## INTRODUCTION.

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*BY the reed given to the apostle John, and the command he received to measure the temple of God, we are to understand a call on him to draw a line of distinction between true and false worshippers, and separate the precious from the vile. This is the duty of every minister of Jesus Christ; but alas! in the present day, there is such an indiscriminate blending together of light and darkness, of good and evil, that mankind, in general, appear lost to a knowledge respecting the acceptable will of the Lord; while others see such an entire disagreement between what many profess and what they practise, that they feel disgust, and turn away their attention from the subject of religion altogether.*

*Various, indeed, have been the extremes into which men have gone, while few have walked in a right way; and such a dust has been raised by disputes and altercations, one with another, and such a multiplicity of sentiments have been held forth, that the sincere hearted hardly know what course to direct their steps.*

*The author has no other object in view, but to communicate clear ideas respecting the nature of true religion. He trusts he shall not be biassed by any prepossessions in what he writes, or have his mind darkened by prejudice; and if the things contained in these pages are found to accord with the truth of the gospel, he hopes they will have a suitable influence on those who read them.*

T. R. GATES.

Philadelphia, July, 1815.

# MEASURING REED, &c.

## PART I.

*Shewing what are no certain signs of a renewed or gracious state.*

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 " And there was given me a reed like unto a rod : and the angel stood, saying, Rise and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not." - - - - - Rev. xi. 1, 2.  
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WHEN we reflect upon the many thousands in different ages of the world, who have been possessed with an idea that they were the peculiar favourites of heaven, when at the same time they were so far from being acceptable unto God, that they were even an abomination in his sight; every prudent man will be led to examine with candor and sincerity the foundation upon which his own belief of divine acceptance is built. In order to be able to decide with correctness on this point, it is indispensably necessary, that we should know *wherein true religion consists, and what are*

*the distinguishing qualifications of those that are in favour with God.* There is no knowledge of greater importance to mankind than this, and no study in which every individual person is more deeply concerned.

Through a want of this knowledge, many, in the most confident belief that they were doing God service, have been found fighting against God, and endeavouring, to the utmost of their power to destroy his true worshippers. Others again, who made sure from their great performances, that they should go straight to heaven when they died, have been so utterly destitute of every principle of goodness, that in the very nature of things, they could not escape the damnation of hell. Whilst others have had such an exalted idea of their attainments in religion, that, in their own estimation, they were *rich, increased with goods*, and had *need of nothing*, when in regard to any thing truly right, they were *poor and miserable*, and *blind and naked*.

Facts have demonstrated, that a person may be very strict and particular in all the outward performances of religion, and suppose himself sure of eternal life, and be at the same time, an enemy in his heart to God and all true religion. Witness the Pharisees, at the time they crucified the Saviour; and the fastings, abstinences, and masses of the Catholics, at the time they burned the martyrs in the flames. So again, persons may be greatly animated, feel abundance of joy, and seem to have their hearts much drawn towards the things of religion,

when after all, there is no change wrought in them ; they are in the flesh still. Herod heard John gladly, and the stony ground hearers received the word with joy, yet in neither of these was any thing to be found of a saving nature.

It is natural, and requires no higher principle than nature, to feel greatly stirred up, on hearing the torments of the wicked, and to be enlivened and carried away with pleasing sensations on a representation of the glories and enjoyments of heaven ; yea, persons may feel a sort of love and gratitude towards the Lord, from an idea that the Lord loves them and is engaged in promoting their cause, or on experiencing some particular deliverance, and yet at the same time have nothing beyond nature in them, and nature too very depraved. I have read an account of an old Catholic, who, when about to die, received intelligence of the great slaughter of the protestants at the revocation of the edict of Nantz ; at hearing this, his spirits seemed revived, joy sprang up in his heart, and he was full of love and grateful affections towards the Lord ; saying, in the words of pious old Simeon, “and now, Lord, lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.” So also the carnal Israelites sung God’s praises at the Red Sea, but soon forgot his works, and rebelled against him. Affections, therefore, it is plain, often arise out of men’s own natures, unrenewed and unsanctified by the Holy Spirit.



For want of considering this point, many take up an idea from certain exercises they have, or inward feelings, that they are heirs of the kingdom of heaven, and confidently expect to be owned and accepted of God, when there is no real inward change effected in their hearts. It is all only the workings of their own spirits, operated upon by self love. Their own interest is the only thing they have at heart, and after all their professions of love to God, and all the pleasurable sensations they experience, they will be shut out of the kingdom of heaven. Some in old time, seemed to have a great deal of love to Christ; saying, "I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest;" yet their hearts were unsound at the bottom. Others followed him from place to place, and clean over the lake, because they eat of the loaves and were filled, and not out of a sincere regard to the truth of his doctrine. Whatever such people may feel or do, or whatever they may profess, they will be rejected as workers of iniquity. For people may say, Lord, Lord, make a great show of love to him, and eat and drink in his presence, and after all, go to hell.

Iniquity may be as effectually worked under the appearance of religion, and in the performance of its duties, if the heart be not right towards the Lord, as in any other way whatever, and at the same time, the persons may have no idea they are working iniquity, but may suppose the Lord is highly pleased with them, and

has great delight in their performances. Even the *solemn meeting* of the false hearted Jews in the time of Isaiah, the Lord declared to be *iniquity*, and our Saviour testified, that the Pharisees should receive *the greater damnation*, on account of their *long prayers*.

Very few in this day are careful to inform themselves respecting the nature of true religion, but take up with any thing that comes to hand, under the name of religion, caring only to get to heaven. Some, indeed, after they have taken up an idea that they are the children of God, will persist in maintaining it against all scripture, reason, and every thing else. For it is no sign that a man's state is good, because he is carried away with an idea that it is the case. It was thus with the Scribes and Pharisees in our Saviour's time; they judged their state to be very good, and were in confident expectation of eternal life. To intimate any thing to the contrary, excited in them the highest indignation. Nevertheless, the Saviour says to them, "how can ye escape the damnation of hell." Little did they think that hell would be their portion.

There are three ways whereby people become deceived, in regard to their state. *First*, Many have the most confident belief that their state is good, from certain suggestions to their minds, or an inward persuasion that they are the people of God, and that God loves them, without any just grounds for such a persuasion. *Secondly*, Others make sure that the Lord has

a great regard to them, and will receive them into heaven, by reason of the many duties they perform, and the multitude of their good actions. And *Thirdly*—There are those again that have such inward sensations, exercises of mind, and animated feelings, together with such an appearance of love, joy, and peace, that they think, in the nature of things, it cannot be otherwise than that they are the chief of saints, when at the same time, it may be only the workings of their own unsanctified hearts, without any divine influence on them whatever.

Few people are careful to examine the source from whence suggestions come, or consider the cause by which their persuasion is produced ; while others neither weigh their actions in the balance of the sanctuary, nor try their affections by the standard of the gospel. Hence it is, that Satan comes forward with his counterfeit productions, as the magicians did in the time of Moses, and completely deludes and deceives the degenerate sons of men. For as there is hardly any coin but has its counterfeit, so it is in this case. “It is,” says one, “the easiest thing in life, to be deceived in matters of religion ; counterfeit faith may be so adjusted, expressed and exhibited, as not to be distinguished from evangelical faith, but by a spiritual and a discriminating eye. Legalists, Pharisees, and Antinomians may perform the same actions, may make the same professions, and use the same language, as the true saints of God ; but their motives, their hopes, their

expectations are not the same, much less are their views." Satan and our own corrupt and deceitful hearts, are ever ready to beguile and deceive us to our ruin ; and I lament to see so many the willing dupes of deception in the present day, only for want of examining things impartially, and dispensing with a little of their self-love.

To proceed : 1. That every suggestion to the mind does not come from the Spirit of God, nor every persuasion arise from a divine influence, nothing is more clear. They often come from pride, self-love, or through the agency of Satan. Thus said the Assyrian king : " By the strength of my hand have I done it, and by my wisdom ; for I am prudent." Whereas he was only as a " rod" in the hand of the Almighty, to scourge a hypocritical nation. " I sit a queen and shall see no sorrow," saith Mystery Babylon, just before death and sorrow come suddenly upon her. Haman thought, surely the king could delight to honor no one more than himself. Nobody, it is likely, could beat him out of a persuasion, that the honor was to be conferred on him, till he was ordered to confer it on another. Oh ! how great was his disappointment.—When the chief baker heard the favourable interpretation of the chief butler's dream, he verily thought his dream good also ; he concluded, no doubt, it would be well with him too. But oh ! remember, he soon was hung ; his pleasing prospects had no solid foundation to stand upon. And see how confident

Ahab's four hundred prophets were, that the king would prosper, and that Ramoth Gilead would be delivered into his hand. It seems they had not a doubt about his success, for when Micaiah presumed to speak contrary to what they had asserted, one of them was filled with indignation towards him, and smote him on the cheek, saying, "Which way went the spirit of the Lord from me, to speak unto thee?" As if he had said, I am confident that I am under the immediate direction of the Spirit of God in what I have declared, and how is it possible, if you are under the influence of the same spirit, that you should speak so directly contrary to what I have predicted. He had such confidence, it seems, in his own prediction, that he set Micaiah down at once for a false prophet; and thought it right, perhaps, to strike him for what he considered his impudence. But it is well known, that this prophet, with all the three hundred and ninety-nine prophets with him, were deceived through the agency of an evil and lying spirit, as confident as they were respecting their predictions.

Thus it appears from the most positive scripture proofs, that all suggestions, however forcible they may come to the mind, are not from the Spirit of God, nor is every persuasion from a divine influence. Persons whose chief anxiety is to have a knowledge of their good estate, and become established in a belief that they shall go to heaven, need not wonder at all if they should be deluded by Satan. I believe it

is often the case. Satan knows what they desire, and how much it will be to his interest to establish in them a belief that their state is good; and their hearts not being rightly exercised towards the Lord, he may leave them to be ensnared by his stratagems: for it is his service they like, and it is only through self love they pay any respect to the Lord, or give themselves the least concern about religion.

Whenever such characters as these become established in a belief that all is well, that God has pardoned all their sins, and has a particular esteem for them, as may be supposed, they are greatly pleased; their confidence is strong, so that nothing can shake it, and Satan, who has been the chief instrument in bringing about this confidence, endeavours by every possible means to keep it up in them, well knowing how firmly it secures them to himself. President Edwards, speaking of such [called evangelical hypocrites] says, "The confidence of many of this sort of hypocrites, is like the confidence of some madmen, who think they are kings: they will maintain it against all manner of reason and evidence." A man in the Southern states, about two years ago, told me his heart was as bad as the devil's, and yet he said he knew the throne of God was set up in it; and further added, "I have in my heart all the abominations the devil can devise, and am as sure of going to heaven, as that I am now living." Mr. Edwards speaks of these hypocrites as being brought off from their confidence with the greatest difficul-

ty. Says he, "I have scarcely known the instance of such an one in my life that has been undeceived."

2. But false suggestions, and a blind confident persuasion of one's good estate, unsupported by evidence, is not the only way people are deceived. The great things which many do, their multiplied prayers, zeal and strictness lead them to conclude, that surely the Lord is well pleased with them. They think it scarcely possible that it should be otherwise. Like the Pharisees of old, from an opinion of their own righteousness, owing to a rigid strictness to the outward letter, they despise all others; and say in their hearts, "stand by, I am more holy than thou." But upon a little reflection, we shall perceive that no external performances, zeal, or engagedness in religion, furnish any conclusive evidence of one's being in a renewed state. All these things may be found in those who are utter strangers to God, and in whom he takes no delight. A man, says the apostle Paul, may give all his goods to feed the poor, and his body to be burned, and yet be nothing.

The grand question to be considered, therefore, is not so much what we do, as what moves us to the doing of it. A mere fear of hell, a desire to be noticed as a very religious character, or a regard to our own interest, may be the moving spring of all our actions. In this case, all we do is of no account in the sight of God. The Pharisees were exceedingly strict in the duties of religion, made long prayers, had much

zeal, and were looked upon as chief saints ; but the Lord had no pleasure in any of their services, their hearts were not purged from defilement. Notwithstanding their fair shew without, within they were full of *dead men's bones, and all uncleanness* ; an expression evidently denoting that their hearts were filled with the deepest iniquity, though it seems they could see no iniquity in their hearts themselves.

That this is the case with most professors in the present day, nothing seems more evident : scarcely any, I fear, at this time, serve the Lord from a free principle of heart. Some desire to get to heaven, and think it a dreadful thing to lose their souls ; they turn in to pray, come out from the more abandoned practices of vice, and are in some things very strict. Here they rest, or rather work on, as it may be said, having no other principle than self-love, regarding only their own interest in all they do. Others again, on the loss of some connexion, or under an exercise of mind through a fear of death or hell, come forward and join some society, and, for a time, seem as persons seeking the right thing : but after a while, they lose all regard to the service of God, and take no delight in his ways. They would now be glad they had never joined in a religious society at all, yet having joined, they think it will not do for them to go back, or neglect the duties they have taken upon themselves to observe, or be absent from their meetings, &c. &c. If they do, they will be called to an account ; and



though they are heartily sick and tired of religion, and would be glad they were clear of it altogether, yet they know not well how to get away therefrom. They do not like to be called a backslider, or be turned out of society, thinking it will be a discredit to them, (they would not like this at all,) so they keep up an outside appearance of religion, perhaps, till they die. While others, it may be, think it will add to their respectability, to belong to some religious denomination; or being merchants, they think, perhaps, they shall have more trade; or if mechanics, conclude they shall be more likely to get employment, &c. &c.\*

Others there are who have a great deal of pleasure in religion, and in the performances of religion. They love to preach, pray, or have something to do in church affairs. They have an idea that they can manage and regulate affairs better than almost any one else. It highly pleases them to be called upon to pray in meetings, as it causes them to be noticed, and they will often tell over what they have done, and magnify it as something great; and you will also, perhaps, be informed how the

\* A certain man in Baltimore, who was a mechanic, in a friendly conversation with a person of my acquaintance, told him that it would not answer—that he must join some denomination of people—that he should never get along in the way he was; for, says he, those that belong to some society of people get employment enough; they are never at a loss for work, and they get along in the world; but that he was in want of work a great part of the time, and could hardly make a living.

Lord favored them at such a time, and what an effect the things they said had upon the people. Such a man as this, now, it is hard to get out of a society; he will try to maintain his cause against any accusation that can be brought against him, so as to keep in the church. Preach he will, if nobody likes to hear him preach; he is fond of preaching; and if people stay away when he is expected to speak, it is not on account of any fault in his preaching, for it is very good, but the fault is in the people, they cannot endure the truth. If the society get so sick and tired of him that they will keep him in no longer, and turn him out, he is persecuted. He next tries to form some little society, condemns the people he was among as bigoted as he was towards them before, (for this sort of people will always be bigots to something—no way is so right as the way they are in, whatever that way may be) and is very anxious that people should become his followers. He thinks he can form a better church than any; he is almost all the while talking about himself and about religion; and should he continue in this religious way as long as he lives, it will fare none the better with him in the other world. He will share the same fate as other wicked men, for his religion is good for nothing. It is only the iniquity of his heart, working itself out in this particular way.

Persons of this description I never wish to fall in with. I can get no good from them,

and as to their getting good from any one else, it is out of the question; there is very little hope that they will ever be brought into a right way, or become completely emptied of themselves. I do not recollect ever to have seen it the case. They know not, I suppose, what real religion is, nor are they much disposed to read, study, or meditate. Their minds are too busy to be brought to any such exercise. It is too dull an employment for them, they are full enough of all knowledge and understanding already, and their chief delight is in talking about religion, preaching, praying, or going to meetings, &c. &c. When in company with others, these sort of people have a great many things to relate; before one relation is ended, another heaves in view, for they are never at a loss for something to talk about; and every thing they say, they consider very interesting, if nobody else considers it so. They take it for granted, that all the company have been highly entertained by what they have said, for the same vanity that led them to speak, leads them to think that no one could have spoken so much to the purpose as they have done.

I could here produce a multitude of these, and such like characters, were it necessary, to shew what a great appearance of religion people may put on, without having one single spark of true inward vital religion: for what signify all our appearances of religion, and all we do, if our hearts be impure, and governed by improper motives. An extract from the

judicious and sensible Mr. Mason, in this place, will be interesting.

“ Unless we come to the motive of our actions, we shall never be able to form a right judgment of them ; and they may appear very different in our own eyes, and the eye of the world, from what they do in the eye of God. *For the Lord seeth not as man seeth : man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart ;* and hence it is, that that which is highly esteemed among men, is oft times abomination in the sight of God. By thus disguising our motives, we may impose upon men, but at the same time impose upon ourselves ; and whilst we are deceiving others, our own hearts deceive us : and of all impositions, self-deception is the most dangerous, because least suspected.

“ It is not only very possible, but very common for men to be ignorant of the chief inducements of their behaviour ; and to imagine they are governed by much better motives than they really are. The honor of God, and the interest of religion, may be the open and avowed motive ; whilst secular interest and secret vanity may be the hidden and true one. While we think we are serving God, we may be only sacrificing to mammon. We may, like Jehu, boast our zeal for the Lord, when we are only animated by the heat of our own natural passions ; may cover a censorious spirit under a cloak of piety, and giving admonition to others, may only be venting our own spleen, &c. &c.

Many go to the place of public worship out of custom or curiosity, who would be thought to go there out of conscience. And whilst their external and professed view is to serve God, and gain good to their souls, their secret and inward motive is only to shew themselves to advantage, or to avoid singularity, and prevent others making observations on their absence. Munificence and almsgiving also may proceed from a principle of pride and party spirit: and seeming acts of friendship, from a mercenary motive."

We may safely conclude in the words of a certain writer, "No external fruit or works, however fair, will constitute a Christian, if they proceed from a corrupt heart; though one herein should go so far as to give all his goods to feed the poor, and his body to be burned;" for not what we do, but what leads us to do it, is what must be looked into, if we would know what we are—Cain offered his sacrifice as well as Abel, but says the scripture, the Lord had not respect unto him, or to his offering. The Pharisees made long prayers, but says the Saviour, "these shall receive the greater damnation." They that are in the flesh, the apostle affirms, *cannot please God*. The reason is evident—they mind the things of the flesh or have a regard to themselves in all they do; for no one can act beyond his principle.

3. In the last place, I proceed to show, people are often deceived in judging of their good estate by false experiences, counterfeit joys,

and a kind of love which only proceeds out of an impure heart, and which the most carnal people are capable of having.

We shall greatly err if we suppose every one that feels joy, has pangs of distress, seems wrought upon, takes delight in the word, and appears engaged in the things of religion, is truly renewed, or born again. Facts fully prove to the contrary. The stony ground hearers received the word with joy, yet had they no root in themselves. Felix trembled, but continued wicked still. The soldiers that went to take our Saviour seemed greatly wrought upon by his discourse. His words, it seems, went with power to their hearts, insomuch that they gave over every idea of taking him, and said, "never man spake as this man;" but it is not likely one of them became his disciples. The men, moreover, that went to apprehend our Saviour in the garden of Gethsemane were even struck down (and by a supernatural power too, no doubt) yet afterwards got up and took him. Herod, also, we read, heard John gladly, and did many things, yet afterwards had him beheaded. And what multitudes followed our Saviour, listening to his discourses, even three days without eating any thing; but few truly became his followers, or took his yoke of self-denial upon them.

People may be very much taken with certain preaching, have very high affections, and be brought to do a great deal, and after all, have no saving change wrought in them, and

soon return again to their former ways :—while others may hold on their way, and keep up an appearance of religion all their days, and be equally destitute of those true internal graces of the Holy Spirit, which alone can qualify one for the kingdom of heaven.

But others go beyond all this, and still are nothing. After fears of hell, and desires to get to heaven, they take up an idea that they have religion—that God has pardoned all their sins, and they are converted. They are then filled with joy and comfort and love, and this puts their conversion, they suppose, beyond all dispute. Their mouths are full of praises, they are forward to declare the goodness of God, and will call on others to praise him. Their happiness is great, and yet, after all, it may be only false affections, like strange fire, or sparks of their own kindling; nothing may be gracious or saving in it at all. Their hearts may be full of sin and self-love all the while, and their natural affections be only operated upon.

Says president Edwards, “A very high affection towards God, may, and often does arise in men, from an opinion of the favour and love of God to them, as the first foundation of their love to him.\* After awakenings and distress,

\* It must here be observed, that Mr. Edwards, and many of the most pious and sensible divines, are very close in their remarks upon those who make saving faith to consist in believing that one's state is good, and that God has pardoned all his sins, and accepts him as an heir of the kingdom of heaven :—Instead of a discovery of the beauty and amiableness of the divine character, and the moral excellency and

through fears of hell, they may suddenly get a notion, through some impression on their imagination, or immediate suggestion with or without texts of scripture, or by some other means, that God loves them, and has forgiven their sins, and made them his children; and this is the first thing that causes their affections to flow towards God and Jesus Christ." This sort of love and affection arising only from self-love, he considers as no proof whatever of an inward saving change, since self-love is a principle entirely natural, and as much in the hearts of devils as men. He continues: "If such persons are asked, whether God appears lovely and amiable in himself, they would, perhaps, readily answer, yes; when indeed, if the matter be strictly examined, this good opinion of God was purchased and paid for before ever they afforded it, in the distinguishing and infinite benefits they imagined they received from God: and they allow God to be lovely in him-

preciousness of divine things, conforming us thereunto, and leading us to love and relish the holy law of God itself, and delight in and observe it, independent of any thing that shall arise to us from such observance. He considers this as the only proof that we are new creatures, and made partakers of the divine nature, since "sinners love those that love them," without any gracious change whatever, and it is clear, that the most impure and carnal of men may, under a notion that God loves them, and is engaged on their side, be brought to feel a great measure of love towards him, and be abundant in praising him, while at the same time their hearts are in direct enmity to the law of God, and to that justice, holiness and purity, which constitute the glory of the divine character, and is the delight of all saints. But more of this elsewhere.



self, no otherwise than that he has forgiven them, and accepted them, and loves them above most in the world, &c. &c. When once they are firm in this apprehension, it is easy to own God and Christ to be lovely and glorious, and to admire and extol them. It is easier for them to own Christ to be a lovely person, and the best in the world, when they are firm in it, that he, though Lord of the universe, is captivated with love to them, and prizes them far beyond most of their neighbours, and will make them reign in eternal glory with him in heaven. And as these sort of persons begin, so they go on. Their affections are raised from time to time, primarily on this foundation of self-love, and a conceit of God's love to them.

"It is easy for nature, as corrupt as it is, under a notion of being already some of the highest favourites of heaven, and having a God who protects and favours them, to love this imaginary God, and to extol him, submit to him, and to be fierce and zealous for him; when they are far from loving such a God as reigns in heaven. The high affections of many are all built on the supposition of their being eminent saints. If that opinion which they have of themselves were taken away, their high affections would fall to the ground."

That people may become liberated from their fears and distress, and be filled with joy and love and comfort, purely through the effect of delusion, without any renovation of their natures by the Spirit of God, no one, perhaps,

will pretend to deny.\* “Let us suppose (says Mr. Edwards) a person, who has been for some time in great exercise and terror, through fear of hell, and upon the brink of despair, and is all at once delivered, by being made firmly to believe, through some delusion of satan, that God has pardoned him, and accepts him as the object of his dear love, though there should be no preceding acceptance of Christ, or closing of the heart with him, what various passions would naturally crowd at once, or one after another, into such a person’s mind! It is easy to be accounted for, from mere principles of nature, that a person’s heart, on such an occasion, should be transported with joy, and be filled with fervent affection, to that imaginary God or Redeemer, who, he supposes, has rescued him from the jaws of such dreadful destruction, and received him with such endearment, as a peculiar favourite; and that now he should be filled with admiration and gratitude, and his mouth should be opened, and be full of talk about what he has experienced; and that, for a

\* “Should a lying fellow bring tidings to an impenitent prisoner, justly condemned to die for murder, assuring him of a pardon from his judge; the deluded murderer might be full of love to his judge, and greatly extol his justice as well as goodness, and pour out floods of tears: but on discovering his mistake, he would soon return to his former temper. God’s nature and law are just the same before he forgives us as after; and as worthy to be loved. But it is easier for an impenitent sinner to commend God’s law, in a firm belief he is delivered from the curse of it, than to love it as being in its own nature, holy, just, and good.”

BELLAMY.

while, he should think and speak of scarce any thing else, and should magnify that God, who has done so much for him, and call upon others to rejoice with him, and appear with a cheerful countenance, and talk with a loud voice. Nor is it to be wondered at, that now he should delight to be with them, who acknowledge and applaud his happy circumstances, and should love all such as esteem and admire him, and what he has experienced, and have violent zeal against all such as are not of his party; and while the warmth of his affections last, should be mighty forward to take pains, and deny himself, to promote the interest of the party, who, he imagines, favors such things, and seem anxious to increase the number of them. And so, I might go on, and mention many other things, which will naturally arise in such circumstances. He must have but slightly considered human nature, who thinks such things as these cannot arise in this manner, without any supernatural interposition of divine power.”\*

\* I would here remark, that I have made lengthy extracts from president Edwards and others, in order more fully to strengthen and enforce the subject matter of this work: for saith the scripture, “In the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word shall be established.” Concerning Mr. Edwards, Erastus Middleton, in his Evangelical Biography, has these words: President Edwards, was one of the wisest, best, and most useful preachers this age has produced; his writings exhibit a remarkable strength of intellect; the perspicuity of thought and depth of penetration discovered in his vindication of the great doctrines of christianity, prove him to be a great scholar, a bright genius, and a great di-

It will be interesting in this place, to make a few extracts from a late discourse on *Satan's transforming himself into an angel of light*, by Mr. Williston. Speaking of the many ways and devices Satan makes use of, to ensnare and ruin the souls of men, and injure the cause of Christ in the world, he remarks,

“Satan has his *conversions*. They, who look upon *all conversions* as the work of God, have but a scanty conception of the force of the text; they have but a small idea of the delusions of the devil. It would be well, if half the apparent conversions, which take place under the light of the gospel, were to prove genuine. The five foolish virgins in the parable, seem to represent those professors, who think they have experienced a gracious change of heart. The stony ground, in the parable of the sower, represents those who appear to have a joyful conversion, yet they have no root in themselves. The dog disgorging his vomit, and then returning to it again; and the washed sow returning to her wallowing in the mire, represent apparent, but not genuine conversions.—Instances are frequent, even up to the present day, of *deceptive conversions*, as is proved by the fruit which follows; for bad fruit is proof of a bad tree. To fill the world full of such conversions,

vine.” He adds—“Few Christians have arrived to equal attainments in the divine life, particularly as to a settled acquiescence in the divine will, and a devotedness of heart to the Redeemer.”

and the church full of such converts, 'hell is stirred from beneath.' The wiles of the devil in this one thing are multiform.

"Satanic conversions are of many sorts: but they all agree in this, that they are false and worthless. They resemble a true conversion in this, that there is *first* an alarm sounded, the conscience is awakened, and fears of future punishment are excited; and then succeed peace, joy and hope. In these conversions there is no real change of nature. The devil well knows that it is the nature of every sinful creature to love himself supremely, and to be pleased with his own exaltation. He knows also that our hearts are deceitful above all things. He knows that a sinner, under the greatest alarm about the concerns of another world, has still a perfect aversion to disinterested religion, or a real change of heart; and yet that he would give all the wealth of the Indies, if they were his, to purchase a state of peace and safety. With great anxiety and distress of soul, the sinner cries out, 'What shall I do to be saved?' Satan hears his groans, and sees his tears, and is anxious to afford him speedy relief; not that he might be saved, but that by means of a false confidence of his salvation, he might make his damnation the more sure. This arch-deceiver knows that all which is necessary to allay the alarm of the sinner, and give ease to his troubled mind, is to make him believe that he is not to be miserable, but happy, in another world. To effect this he has

many very subtle devices. Could we have a true history of all his delusive conversions, there would no doubt be an almost endless variety in them. But the most of the spurious conversions are capable of being classed under a few general heads. The following may be some of them.

"1. *Dreams.* There is reason to conclude, that very many have been deceived with a dreaming conversion.\* Dreams are either common, coming, as the wise man observes, through the multitude of business; or they are extraordinary, being impressed by other agents upon our senses while we are asleep. They may be produced immediately by the Supreme agent; or by the instrumentality of good, or of evil spirits. From the scripture we learn, that the Lord has frequently revealed himself to men by dreams. This manner of revealing himself, has not been confined to good men. Wicked men have had such communications, and remained wicked still. Pharoah, king of Egypt, and his chief butler and baker, had such communications made to them, without their hearts being thereby renewed. It is perfectly

\* No one who believes the scripture will pretend to deny, but dreams often proceed from a divine source, and are sent as admonitions and warnings to those who have them. But as our author remarks, they may be produced by the *instrumentality of evil spirits*—hence the folly of those who rest a thing of such importance as the salvation of their souls on any such foundation, instead of a new nature formed within, and in being made conformable to the divine image.

within the reach of Satan's power, to help us to a dream ; and he can help us to a pleasant, as well as an uncomfortable dream ; and for the sake of deceiving us, it is natural to expect that he will do it. If he can make any impressions on the imagination, he can as easily impress the image of light, as of darkness ; of heaven, as of hell : of Christ, ~~and~~ of himself. He knows, the dreaming of light, ~~will~~ not make us children of the light ; that dreaming of heaven, will not prepare us for that holy place ; and that dreaming of Christ, will not make us christians. But he hopes that by such pleasant dreams, and especially by an assemblage of them, we shall fancy ourselves the favourites of heaven.

~ "Suffer me, on such an interesting subject, to be very particular. Suffer me to expose the wiles of the devil, by introducing some cases which have fallen within my knowledge, in which, I think, there is much reason to believe, his subtilty has been concerned. I recollect the case of a man, who had a very extraordinary dream concerning the invisible world, first having hell, and then heaven discovered to him, with an assurance, that he should at length come to heaven. And to make it more remarkable, he had the same dream twice in the same night. He was very much affected with his dream. It produced at first quite a sensible effect upon his conduct. Among other effects, I believe, it was the means of introducing prayer into his family. He sought the com-

pany of the Lord's people, and was admitted into their holy communion: But from what I have since learned, the enduring fruit, that great evidence of a thorough change, has not been evident.

“Suffer me here to mention another similar case. I knew a man in the western country, who had been quite inattentive to religion, and not very moral in his life, who, in a time of religious attention, dreamed that he saw a rock with pure water proceeding from the bottom of it. He thought a heavenly messenger directed him to drink; and that upon doing this, he was greatly refreshed. He was then directed to go and invite a particular neighbour of his, whose name was mentioned to him, to come and drink. When he awoke he was much affected with his dream; he went to his neighbour, pointed out to him in the dream, and to others, to invite them to drink of the rock. All thought, surely this man must be a new creature. But it took but a little time to make it manifest, that the water which he drank did not flow from the Rock, Christ; because it did by no means prove to be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. There is very little reason to doubt, but that this dream was produced by Him, of whom our text speaks, as transformed into an angel of light. His design, in producing such an image upon the mind of this man while asleep, was evidently this; to make him think that he had drank of the water.”



*life.* And his making this water appear to spring from the foot of a rock, was peculiarly calculated to deceive; since the scripture represents grace as water flowing from Christ, who is called a Rock. But though the dream was specious, where was there any thing solid in it? Does it need a change of nature, to dream of a rock, and of water proceeding from it, and of our being refreshed by drinking of this water? Where, in all the word of God, is such a thing mentioned, as an evidence, that a man is born of the Spirit?

“2. *Visionary discoveries* made to those awake, is a Satanic wile, by which many graceless souls are led to entertain raised hopes of their interest in the promises. This was probably among ~~the~~ ways in which Satan tempted Christ, when he showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. There is nothing of a holy nature in these *visionary* appearances, however many, and wonderful, and unexpected they may be. Good men have had visions, and so have wicked men. Even the visions of the Almighty did not change the heart of Baalam. There was something of this extraordinary nature, connected with the conversion of Saul the persecutor. But the light which he saw, and the voice which he heard, were not the conversion itself: Yet Satan has caught hold of these appendages of his conversion, and by imitating them has led thousands to think they were converted.

“There are many in the christian church,

who think Satan has no such power ; but that all such visionary appearances are either pretended, or made by the persons who have them. Such are requested carefully to peruse EDWARDS on Religious Affections. Here they will find, it has been a general sentiment among those, who have written on experimental religion, that the devil has made abundant use of such means, to deceive and ruin the children of men. He often prepares the way for this deception to take effect and ensnare us, by previously exciting an expectation, or desire of some such appearance.

“The preacher here desires to mention for the benefit of others, that he is not altogether ignorant of these devices of Satan. In the days of his youth, when his mind was exercised about the concerns of futurity, and when without any reason, he was beginning to hope that matters were right between God and his soul, he asked explicitly one night as he was going to rest, that if he had any grounds for a *hope*, God would make it *manifest* to him. The way for it to be made manifest, was not pointed out in the petition ; but it is now clearly recollected that some *external* manifestation was desired and looked for. The same night he was suddenly awaked from sleep—his chamber appeared to be filled with light, and Christ, as it was then imagined, made a visible appearance, as though he had come to save. This visionary appearance produced a very sensible effect upon the animal frame, and the prayer for the

confirmation of a faint hope, was considered as being now answered. But the preacher's sentiment, concerning this imaginary discovery, has long since been completely changed. He did not then understand the import of these words, 'For Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.' Whatever may be his present state, he has no hesitancy, but that even after this discovery, he was still in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity. I feel, my brethren, that if I have any mercies to be thankful for, my deliverance from this delusion, which I chose for myself, is one which should not be forgotten. And I also view myself by this to be laid under peculiar obligation, to oppose the Deceiver, and as an instrument to seek to rescue my fellow-men, who have been deceived by him in a similar manner; and to prevent, as far as possible, others from being taken in his snares.

"I have conversed with numbers, who appeared to be building all their hopes for eternity on such rotten foundations. One has seen a light and heard music, and concluded it was the melody of angels.—Another has heard Christ call him by name, and knew it was Christ's voice, because no other could speak with such a voice, &c. &c. But let it be inquired, what there is in all the visions, and voices in the world, which has the nature of religion; or is any evidence of it. Where are we informed, that seeing a light, or hearing a voice spoken to us, is evidential of a change of heart? If

many saw Christ with their eyes, and heard him with their ears, and yet would not come to him for life, then no doubt we may have any kind of visionary discoveries of him, and still reject him.

“3. Satan effects many of his conversions by bringing texts of scripture, especially the promises, to those who are troubled in mind about the concerns of eternity. Herein he appears marvelously transformed; for all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable to promote awakening, conviction, conversion and sanctification. The word of God is the mighty weapon, by which the strong holds of Satan are pulled down. How wonderful then it must appear, to see Satan himself using this very weapon to strengthen his strong holds, and to oppose the reign of Christ. But it is no more than what our text warns us to expect from such a deceiver. And we have a striking instance of his making use of this very weapon, with an intent to destroy the life of the Captain of Salvation himself. He quoted a promise which he found in the 91st Psalm, to induce the Son of God to throw himself down from the pinnacle of the temple. By this we learn, that the devil knows the scripture; that he is permitted of God to use it, and that he is crafty in applying it in such a way, as is calculated to blind the mind and lead us to trust in a lie. How easy it is for him to whisper, or suggest to the troubled soul, such a passage as this, ‘Son, be of good cheer;’ Or

‘Daughter, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee.’ And how many, have considered this as sufficient proof of their interest in the covenant of promise. But merely having these passages suggested to the mind, is no evidence in our favor.

“Our having a *great many* promises come to our mind, and that within a *short time*, and in a very *extraordinary way*; and if we can say, that we did not know that there were such promises in the bible; and if they also appear exceedingly applicable to our case; still it is not any evidence, that we are passed from death unto life. But Satan deceives very many in this way. They think it would be very wicked to question the reality of what God has done for them, seeing he has confirmed it by so many precious promises. I once heard a woman tell an experience, that I have since very much feared was of this kind; which seemed very remarkable on account of the number and rareness of the promises which came to her mind, and the rapidity with which they succeeded each other, until she was overcome, and thought she ought no more to doubt. But how easy it is for one to be quite overcome by such things, while they have not seen the real intrinsic excellency and glory of a single promise, but are affected altogether in a selfish way. Having a *promise* come to the mind, is no proof that we have a right to the promises; and when *Satan* quiets the mind of a sinner with a promise, it is wholly the selfish applica-

tion which is made of it that fills his mind with joy and peace.

“4. Persons may fancy themselves new creatures, because their *natural gifts* are improved and enlarged. But without a renovation of heart, the natural powers may be assisted, a freedom of thought be given, and a flow of suitable expressions follow, so as greatly to affect the mind and lead us to fancy we have the spirit of prayer. The beginning of such feelings we may consider as our conversion, and still our conversion be no better than a delusion of the devil. Satan may be willing, that we should speak with the tongues of men and angels, and understand all mysteries, if we remain destitute of that divine charity, without which we are nothing.—False conversions have often had much prayer connected with them; therefore let none conclude their hearts are changed, merely because they have enlargement in prayer. The children of Israel felt engaged in singing praise to God, after he had brought them through the Red Sea, and had overthrown their enemies. They were much affected with the deliverance which he had wrought for them, and this made them, in a sense, hearty in their song of praise: But in most of them self-love was at the bottom. So when sinners, who have been afraid of endless punishment, indulge a false hope that they are pardoned, they may be ready to leap for joy, and speak of God’s goodness in the most affecting language; they may wish to be continually in adoration and praise;

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and still the root of the matter not be in them. They rejoice, but it is wholly in view of their own happy state. Such was the joy of the stony-ground hearers.

“5. Another way that a false hope is obtained, is by putting together all the *items* of conviction, that the whole may amount to a conversion. The sinner says, ‘I have done enough since I was awakened, to have some hope. I have mourned, and grieved, and wept, and confessed, and reformed: Put all these together it is enough to amount to a being born again.’ Those malicious spirits, who make it their main work, to destroy souls, are pleased with such compounded conversions, made up of many graceless performances, or spiritual cyphers, which, multiplied ever so much, amount to nothing but a hope, which will in the end make ashamed.

“6. Satan has probably deceived some by causing an agreeable sensation, of a sudden, to pervade the animal system. This would be no more beyond his power, than what he frequently did to men’s bodies in the time of our Saviour. It requires no more power to produce an agreeable, than a disagreeable sensation. And such an agreeable sensation in the animal frame, may be mistaken by the awakened sinner, for the peace of God which passeth understanding; and for the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost. An awakened sinner will be ready like a drowning man, to catch at every straw. He wants comfort, but

he hates holiness: he wishes for peace, but he is opposed to reconciliation. This sweet feeling in his breast, which he may call burning love, and which Satan is able to help him to, is the very thing to suit his corrupt heart. This he can have, without the expense of denying himself; and now he hopes, that God has had mercy on him. He says, 'I feel easy, my distress is all gone, and in a way that I cannot account for; I find myself strangely relieved; must it not be that God has appeared for my soul?'

"When after a great struggle in our breasts, we are at length relieved, it is very important to find out what has relieved us. Have we been relieved by loving God, and hating sin? Or have we been relieved by believing that we were converted? They, who are quickened by the Spirit, love conversion itself; and they, who are dead in sin, may love to *think* that they are converted. These merely want the benefit of it: but those love the holiness which pertains to the new birth.

"7. There are conversions which are made up of a *forced submission* to God. The awakened sinner is told that he must submit to God; that there is no other hope in his case. He sets a time perhaps, when he is determined to surrender himself up to his rightful Sovereign. He undertakes and accomplishes the work. It has all been mechanically done; but the *heart* has not been in it. He has not grounded the weapons of his rebellion, because he has be-



come pleased with his King; or because it is the choice of his heart, that he should live and reign forever. His forced submission is of no worth, but his rebellious heart is pleased with it, and the devil will seek to persuade him, that this is a sound conversion.\*

"These several particulars, to which your attention has been called, probably include many of the ways, by which the devil seeks to promote graceless conversions among the children of Adam. But let it not be imagined, that *all* his stratagems have been exposed. They are many, and various: and when he finds certain wiles of his discovered and exposed, he may be expected to shift his ground, and take new methods to deceive.† The old wile of seeing

\* "I would here observe, that I do not suppose, false conversions are always effected by the influence of evil spirits. We may, without their wiles, deceive ourselves. And *they* could not deceive us with a selfish religion, if our hearts did not prefer such religion. Men deceive one another, and are abundantly instrumental of promoting false conversions. But it is also evident, that evil spirits are instrumental of promoting them, by their deceitfully imitating the work of God's Spirit, and painting upon the imagination such images as will be likely to make us believe, that God hath done great things for us. As Satan is the prince of all these evil spirits, and the head of all the kingdom of darkness, he may be said to be the author of all the mischief which is done. In this sense, it may not be improper to represent every false conversion as his work."

† Herein is Satan's grand device in bringing about his false conversions—he keeps thousands forever from getting a true one. They consider all is well, and all is safe, and therefore nothing can arouse them. No trouble for fear of being lost at all takes hold of them. When it is declared in their hearing, that unless a man be born again, he cannot enter

Christ on the cross, or with a smiling countenance; and seeing lights, and hearing voices, is not entirely laid aside as it respects us; but there are probably more among our congregations, who are deceived by an unaccountable relief of mind after great distress, without searching for the moral cause of this relief; or by a forced submission to God; or feeling a new liberty in prayer; which things, it has been shown, do not necessarily imply a new heart. Many in our day are probably deceived by forcing themselves to *believe*, that they are interested in Christ. There are those that hold the sentiment, that any heart is a soil good enough for the growth of faith; that it can spring up in an unrenewed heart, and that this will produce a renovation. But that faith, which can spring up in a natural heart, can be no *cause* or *evidence* of the new birth. It is the duty of all men, regenerate, and unregenerate, to believe on Christ; but while men remain unregenerate, they never do believe, in any better sense than the devils themselves, of whom it is said, 'they believe and tremble.'

"In view of what has been said about Satan's conversions, some may desire to ask what becomes of these conversions. To this inquiry it may be answered:

"*First.* Very many of them come to nothing in a short time. It has not been uncommon,

into the kingdom of heaven, they feel rather comfortable than otherwise; taking it for granted, that they have already experienced this gracious change.

after seasons of special attention to religion, to see numbers of the professed converts, within a few months, returning to their folly. There are others, who endure longer ; and yet when a greater temptation assails them, are also seen to turn back. Satan's conversions make way for apostacies from the christian church. And apostacies, especially when they take place among those, who have appeared to be called out of darkness into marvellous light, bring great contempt on the cause of truth. Here we see one very important object, which the devil has in promoting these false conversions, He does not seek merely the destruction of the soul of the false convert ; but he designs to bring the work of the Holy Spirit into contempt. In view of such apostacies, he knows that many will say, ' See these men ; they were once great converts, and were mightily taken up with the things of religion ; but now, they do not believe any thing about it ; they do not even believe the bible.' Some of these apostates become open infidels. In supporting the infidel cause, they have advantage over their fellows ; for they will back it all, by saying, that they know all about christianity, not even excepting the experimental part, which any christian knows. They have been converted as well as he, and they know it all to be a delusion. Here they mistake. It is true, *their* conversion was a delusion, and the work of the devil ; but the *christian's* conversion is real, and the work of God.

**"Secondly.** Some of those who are deceived about their conversion, do undoubtedly continue under this deception as long as they live.\*

\* This is agreeable to what Bunyan has stated in his *Pilgrim's Progress* concerning *Ignorance*. "Now while I was gazing on these things, (says he,) I turned my head to look back, and saw Ignorance coming up to the river side; but he soon got over, and that without half the difficulty which the other two men met with; for it happened that there was then in that place one *Vain-hope*, a ferry-man, who with his boat helped him over; so he, as the other, I saw did ascend the hill, to come up to the gate. When he came up to the gate he looked up to the writing that was above, and then began to knock, supposing that entrance would have been quickly administered to him: But he was asked by the man who looked over the top of the gate, Whence come you and what would you have? He answered I have eat and drank in the presence of the King, and he has taught in our streets. They then asked him for his certificate, that they might go in and shew it to the King; so he fumbled in his bosom for one, and found none. So they told the King; but he would not come down to see him, but commanded the two shining ones that conducted Christian and Hopeful to the city, to go out and take Ignorance, and bind him hand and foot, and have him away. Then they took him up, and carried him through the air to the door that I saw on the side of the hill, and put him in there. Then I saw that there was a way to hell, even from the gates of heaven, as well as from the city of Destruction." "Hence see, (says the author of notes on *Pilgrim's Progress*) that ignorant vain confident professors, may keep up a profession, even unto the end, and maintain a hope even unto the last. Vain Hope is ever ready to assist Ignorance. He wanted him at the last, and he found him. He had been his companion through life, and will not forsake him in the hour of death. You see Ignorance had no bands in his death; no fears, no doubts and sorrows, no terror, all appeared serene and happy Vain-hope was his ferryman, and he, as the good folks say, died like a lamb; Oh, but did such lambs see what was to follow, when Vain-hope had wafted them over the river, they would roar like lions."—"Yea (says one) many tens of thousands of high professors,

There are some, who, by a false conversion, build their house upon the sand, whose house is never swept away until they die. There are those, who do not find out that they have no oil in their vessels, until the bridegroom has already come. There are not a few, who seem to go through life, without giving up their hope, when they appear to have very little, if any thing to keep alive their hope, except to recollect, and once in a while, relate what they first experienced. They can well remember, that at such a time, when they were in great distress about their future state, they saw a light shining into their chamber: Or they can remember a very remarkable dream which they had, and how affected with it they were when they awoke: Or they can remember the time, when there was a text came to them, which assured them of their happy state. These things they can remember and relate, as long as they live. This makes them feel comfortable, when they think of it; and this is all the religion they desire.

“There are others whose hearts are deceived with a false conversion, who appear quite differently from these, and yet are no better. They take much pains to nourish and keep alive their hope, and Satan seems disposed to lend all his aid to help them to do it. It is observed, that every animal lives upon his own food. This observation may be applied to religion. Every

who die in ecstasies of joy, if they could see beyond an hour, they would tremble like Belshazzar.”

hope is fed and nourished by its own proper food.\* A visionary hope needs visionary discoveries to live upon. There are some, whose religion seems to be kept alive by one remarkable dream after another ; or by one vision after another. Those who first obtained a hope by letting the bible fall open itself, until it presented a sweet promise to their eye, often resort to this same method to revive their hope, when they seem to be languishing. If a conversion is made up at first out of the selfish, but engaged performances of an awakened sinner, the hope arising out of such a conversion, may be cherished, through his whole life, by the repetition of self-righteous performances. He goes about to establish his own righteousness, but is ignorant of the righteousness of God. A selfish

\* In unison with the above sentiment, a writer, speaking of certain preachers, who being ignorant of the nature of true religion, suppose it consists in an assumed zeal or ardency of expression, thus remarks ; " These men, although sincere in their intentions, are calculated to do much evil. For by their loud, but dead ministry, and by the power of vocal music and sympathy, or the terrors of hell, operating upon the animal feelings, people get what is called converted ; hence, they can only judge of the solidness of their conversion, and also of their future spiritual state, by their frames and feelings. If, therefore, by the power of music or sympathy, they can re-animate their feelings, and work themselves into ecstatic frames, they think their spiritual state both safe and sound. And hence, there are so many people, who make high professions of religion, and punctually attend all the means of grace ; yet they love the world, and the things of the world ; and if they love their neighbours, it is for the sake of self-interest ; and God they love for the sake of recompence : were there no heaven, nor hell, their love would soon expire."

hope is always fed by selfish discoveries. As a true conversion is holy in its nature, so it lives on holiness. It could not live on visions, let them be ever so many; these would appear like husks; but bread alone will satisfy him, who is born from above.

“In view of what has been suggested concerning religious delusions, some may say, Who can tell but that all religion is a Satanic delusion? It may be answered, *Satan* having so much religion, proves that *Christ* has some. *Satan* would not even make a *show* of religion, if there were no such thing in *reality*: for religion is a thing very foreign to his character. *Satan*’s delusive conversions furnish an argument in favour of the doctrine of the *new birth*. Why does he, by such a variety of deceptive ways, produce the counterfeit, if the reality does not exist? The counterfeit bank bills, which knaves are seeking to put off all around the country, show that banks exist, which emit bills that are genuine.

“It may be thought by some, that what has been said about the various delusions which are found in the christian world, may discourage attention to experimental religion; for it may be said, Who can distinguish the true from the false? To this it may be replied, that there is a real, and discernable difference, between a true, and a false conversion. I know that there are points of resemblance. They both have joy, and in both the joy follows a season of distress of mind. The new convert, whether his conversion be genuine, or not, attends to prayer,

reads his bible, talks of religion, seeks the society of those who are serious ; and it is generally true, that he reforms his life. But notwithstanding these points of resemblance, there is, in the sight of God, a plain and perfect difference between the work of his holy spirit, and a delusive work of the devil, which is helped on by our own self-righteous hearts. And this difference is capable of being discerned by every man, as it respects himself.

“ A word added on this subject, may not be unimportant. Some hearer may anxiously inquire, How shall I know whether I am really born of God ; how can I distinguish a real change of heart from a Satanic delusion ? To this interesting inquiry an answer is at hand. Make nothing an evidence of a change of heart, but *holiness*, in all its various branches. Regeneration is a real change of heart from *sin* to *holiness*. They, who have this change, are created anew after the holy image of God. The restoration of this holy image to our hearts, is all the evidence which we can have, that we are new creatures. Although Satan is transformed into an angel of light, he never impresses the divine image on any of his converts. When they think they are converted, they are just as destitute of holiness as ever they were. It is still true of them, that when they eat, and when they drink, they eat unto themselves, and drink unto themselves. When they fast and when they pray, it is not at all unto God, even unto God ; and when they externally observe his



commands, it is not done from love to the pure law of God. This you will find to be universally true, that Satan's conversions, and all false religion, are built upon selfish love, as the foundation. In many delusive schemes, and delusive conversions, much art is used to hide this foundation from sight ; but if we will take pains to dig down, and search it out, we shall certainly find it so. If we are contented with selfish religion ; with selfish, instead of godly sorrow ; with a selfish faith, instead of that which worketh by love ; with a partial love to our own particular denomination, instead of love to all saints ; and with a servile obedience to some, instead of a cheerful obedience to all God's commandments ; when Christ appears, our hopes will be blown away like chaff of the summer threshing floor."

The author from whence these extracts are made concludes in these words :

"The many delusions which there are in the world, by means of which, thousands and millions are deceived and ruined, instead of discouraging our attention to doctrinal and experimental religion, should be the means of greatly exciting it. *Strive to enter in at the straight gate*, said the Saviour: *For many I say unto you will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.* If there is great danger of a mistake, then there is great need of close and prayerful attention to the subject. They, who think all shining metal is gold, are liable to be deceived and ruined in their interest : but a knowledge of the de-

ceits which are practised, in order to pass base metals for gold, should lead us to inquire whether there are not ways, by which gold may be distinguished from these. *Prove all things; hold fast that which is good*, is the direction given by the Apostle: And if we will not impartially examine our own hearts by such rules as are laid down in the bible, our blood will be upon our own heads, if we perish for ever."

As the subject now under consideration (viz. of building our hopes of eternal happiness on false and improper grounds) is a subject in which we are all deeply interested, I shall here add some extracts from president Edwards's *Treatise concerning Religious affections*. I do this the rather, because his repute long since has been established as one of the most pious and sensible divines; and therefore what he has said on this subject may have much more weight with many persons, than any thing I might say, though equally true.

After stating at considerable length, that religion lies mostly in the affections, that where there are no affections there is no religion, he goes on to observe that there are false affections and true, or those which are gracious and those which are not so, and the right way is not to reject all affections, nor to approve all, but to distinguish between affections, approving some, and rejecting others; separating between the wheat and the chaff, the gold and the dross, the precious and the vile. In the next place he proceeds to mention some things

which are no signs one way or the other, either that affections are such as true religion consists in, or that they are otherwise, as hereafter follows.

I. *“It is no sign that religious affections are gracious, or otherwise, because they are very great or raised very high.”*

“Some are ready to condemn all high affections: if persons appear to have their religious affections raised to an extraordinary pitch, they are prejudiced against them, and determine that they are delusions, without any further enquiry. But since true religion lies very much in religious affections, it follows, that if there be a great deal of true religion, there will be great religious affections; if true religion in the hearts of men be raised to a great height, divine and holy affections will be raised to a great height.

“Love is an affection; but will any christian say, men ought not to love God and Jesus Christ in a high degree? and will any say, we ought not to have a very great hatred of sin, and a very deep sorrow for it? or that we ought not to exercise a great degree of gratitude to God, for the mercies we receive of him, and the great things he has done for the salvation of fallen men? or that we should not have very great and strong desires after God and holiness? The scriptures often require us to exercise very high affections: thus in the first and great commandment of the law, there is an accumulation of expressions, as though words

were wanting to express the degree, in which we ought to love God : 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.'

"The apostle Paul expresses high exercises of affection. Thus he expresses the exercises of pity and concern for others good, even to anguish of heart ; a great, fervent, and abundant love, and earnest and longing desires, and exceeding joy ; and speaks of the exultation and triumphs of his soul, and his earnest expectation and hope, and his abundant tears, and the travels of his soul, in pity, grief, earnest desires, godly jealousy, and fervent zeal, in many places in his epistles, as any one will perceive who reads them.

"The saints and angels in heaven, that have religion in its highest perfection, are exceedingly affected, with what they behold and contemplate of God's perfections and works. They are all as a pure heavenly flame of fire, in their love, and in the greatness and strength of their joy and gratitude. Now the only reason why their affections are so much higher than the holy affections of saints on earth, is, they see the things they are affected by, more according to their truth, and have their affections more conformed to the nature of things. And, therefore, if religious affections in men here below, are but of the same nature and kind with theirs, the higher they are, and the nearer they are to theirs in degree, the better ; because therein

they will be so much the more conformed to truth, as theirs are.

“From these things, it certainly appears, that religious affections being in a very high degree, is no evidence that they are not such, as have the nature of true religion. Therefore they do greatly err, who condemn persons as enthusiasts, merely because their affections are very high.

“And, on the other hand, it is no evidence that religious affections are of a spiritual and gracious nature, because they are great. It is very manifest, by the holy scriptures, that there are religious affections, which are very high, that are not spiritual and saving. The apostle Paul speaks of affections in the Galatians, which had been exceedingly elevated, and which yet he manifestly speaks of as fearing that they were vain, and had come to nothing. So the children of Israel were greatly affected with God’s mercy to them at the Red Sea, where they sang God’s praise; though they soon forgot his works. So they were greatly affected again at Mount Sinai, when they saw the marvellous manifestations God made of himself there; and seemed mighty engaged in their minds, and with great forwardness made answer, when God proposed his holy covenant to them; saying, ‘All that the Lord hath spoken will we do, and be obedient.’ But how soon was there an end to all this mighty forwardness and engagedness of affection? how quickly were they turned aside after other god’s, re-

joicing and shouting around their golden calf! So great multitudes, who were affected with the miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead, were elevated to a high degree, and made a mighty ado, when Jesus presently entered into Jerusalem, exceedingly magnifying Christ; and cut branches of palm-trees, and strewed them in the way; yea, pulled off their garments, and spread them in the way; and cried with loud voices, 'Hosanna to the Son of David, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord, hosanna in the highest;' so as to make the whole city ring again, and put all into an uproar. Here was a vast multitude crying hosanna on this occasion, so that it gave occasion to the Pharisees, to say, 'Behold, the world is gone after him;' but Christ had, at that time, but few true disciples. And how quickly was this ado at an end! all of this nature is quelled and dead, when this Jesus stands bound, with a mock robe and a crown of thorns, to be derided, spit upon, scourged, condemned and executed. Indeed, there was a great and loud outcry concerning him, among the multitude then, as well as before; but of a very different kind: it is not then hosanna, hosanna, but crucify, crucify.\*

\* Paul Wright, in his *Life of Christ*, speaking of the time when he was extended on the cross, observes: "The common people who had received him with hosannas a few days before, now wagged their heads at him as they passed by, and railed on him as a deceiver."

II. *"It is no certain sign that affections have the nature of true religion, that they have great effects on the body."*

"All affections whatsoever, have in some respect or degree, an effect on the body. Such is our nature, and such are the laws of union of soul and body, that the mind can have no lively or vigorous exercise, without some effect upon the body. So subject is the body to the mind, and so much do its fluids, especially the animal spirits, attend the motions and exercises of the mind, that there cannot be so much as an intense thought, without an effect upon them. Yea, it is questionable, whether an embodied soul ever so much as thinks one thought, or has any exercise at all, but that there is some corresponding motion or alteration of motion, in some degree, of the fluids, in some part of the body. Universal experience shews, that the affections have, in a special manner, a tendency to some sensible effect upon the body. And if it be so, that all affections have some effect on the body, we may then suppose, the greater those affections be, and the more vigorous their exercise, the greater will be the effect on the body."

"But great effects on the body oftentimes arise from great affections about temporal things, and when religion is no way concerned in them; and hence are no sure evidences that affections are spiritual. Seeing then, that there are very high affections, both common and spiritual, it is not to be wondered at, that great effects on

the body should arise from both these kinds of affections. And, consequently, these effects are no signs, that the affections they arise from, are of one kind or the other."

And here I must remark, that it is no uncommon thing in modern days, to see people quite overcome, and fall down under the exercise of religious affections; when at the same time, it is perfectly clear in many cases, that those who are the subjects of these affections, are not made alive in Christ Jesus; nor is the power of sin crucified in their hearts. I will here transcribe the words of one who has himself had experience in these things.

"Oft-times (says he) have I been wrapped up in a cloud of ecstasy, by the eloquent sound of pulpit oratory; and when the melody of sacred music (so called) was added thereunto, I have sometimes fell down the victim of enthusiastic delirium. If I arose a new creature, I would call it a blessed delirium, a most sacred enthusiasm—But not so, I straitway departed and forgot what manner of man I was. The spirit of truth forthwith reprov'd me, in the inward of my soul, for my antecedent profession of ecstatic sanctity and subsequent delinquency, and pointed out to me a more excellent way. I truly heard the intellectual voice, but would not understand." The same writer adds, "The most simple, and the most sincere, are liable to mistake the warmth of ministerial oratory, for the power of gospel authority; the flowers of rhetoric, for the fruit and



effects of the spirit. Great care ought to be taken to avoid this snare, which has proved fatal to many ten thousand professors."

Mr. Edwards speaking of public performances and preaching, observes, "There may be such means used, as have a great tendency to stir up the passions of weak and ignorant persons, and yet have no great tendency to benefit their souls: for, though (says he) they may have a tendency to excite affections, they may have little or none to excite gracious affections, or any affections tending to grace.

III. *"It is no certain sign that affections are truly gracious, that they cause those who have them, to be fluent, fervent and abundant, in talking of the things of religion."*

"There are many persons, who, if they see this in others, are greatly prejudiced against them. Their being so full of talk is with them a sufficient ground to condemn them as Pharisees, and ostentatious hypocrites. On the other hand, there are many, who, if they see this effect in any, are very ignorantly and imprudently forward, at once to determine, that they are the true children of God, and under the saving influences of his Spirit, and speak of it as a great evidence of a new creature: they say, 'such an one's mouth is now opened: he used to be slow to speak; but now he is full and free: he is free now to open his heart, and tell his experiences, and declare the praises of God; it comes from him, as free as water from a fountain;' and the like. And especially are

they captivated into a confident and undoubting persuasion, that they are savingly wrought upon, if they are not only free and abundant, but very affectionate and earnest in their talk.

“But this is the fruit of but little judgment, a scanty and short experience; as events do abundantly shew: and is a mistake, persons often run into, through their trusting to their own wisdom and discerning, and making their own notions their rule, instead of the holy scripture. Though the scripture be full of rules, both, how we should judge of our own state, and also, how we should be conducted in our opinion of others: yet we have no where any rule, by which to judge ourselves or others to be in a good state, from any such effect: for this is but the religion of the mouth and of the tongue, which are no where given as an evidence of the goodness of one's state.

“It is very much the nature of the affections, of whatever kind they be, and whatever objects they are exercised about, if they are strong, to dispose persons to be very much in speaking, of that which they are affected with; and therefore persons talking abundantly and fervently about the things of religion, can be an evidence of no more than this, that they are very much affected with the things of religion; but this may be, (as has been already shewn,) and there be no grace. That, which men are greatly affected with, while the high affection lasts, they will be earnestly engaged about, and will be likely to shew that earnestness, in their talk and

behaviour; as the greater part of the Jews, in all Judeah and Galilee, did for a while, about John the Baptist's preaching and baptism, when they were willing for a season to rejoice in his light: a mighty ado was made, all over the land, and among all sorts of persons, about this great prophet and his ministry. And so the multitude, in like manner, often manifested a great earnestness, a mighty engagedness of spirit, in every thing that was external, about Christ, and his preaching and miracles, 'being astonished at his doctrine, anon with joy receiving the word;' following him sometimes, night and day, leaving meat, drink and sleep to hear him; once following him unto the wilderness, fasting three days going to hear him; sometimes crying him up to the clouds, saying, 'Never man spake like this man!' being fervent and earnest in what they said. But what did these things come to, in the greater part of them?

"A person may be over full of talk of his own experiences; commonly falling upon it, every where, and in all companies; and when it is so, it is rather a dark sign than a good one. As a tree, that is over-full of leaves, seldom bears much fruit, and as a cloud, though to appearance very pregnant and full of water, if it brings with it over-much wind, seldom affords much rain to the dry and thirsty earth: which very thing the Holy Spirit is pleased several times to make use of, to represent a great shew of religion with the mouth, without answerable

fruit in the life: 'Whoso boasteth himself of a false gift, is like clouds and wind without rain.' And the apostle Jude, speaking of some in the primitive times, that crept in unawares among the saints, and having a great shew of religion, were for a while not suspected, 'There are clouds (says he) without water, carried about of winds.' And the apostle Peter, speaking of the same, says, 'These are clouds, without water, carried with a tempest.' False affections, are much more forward to declare themselves, than true: because it is the nature of false religion, to affect shew and observation; as it was with the Pharisees.\*

IV. *"It is no certain sign that affections are gracious, that the persons did not make them themselves, or excite them of their own contrivance, and by their own strength."*

"Grace in the heart is not indeed produced by our own strength, nor is it the effect of the natural power of our own faculties, but is properly the workmanship and production of the Spirit of the Almighty. So that it is very unreasonable and unscriptural, to determine, that affections are not from the gracious

\* That experimental divine Mr. Shepard, says, 'A Pharisee's trumpet shall be heard to the town's end; when simplicity walks through the town unseen. Hence a man will sometimes covertly commend himself, (and myself ever comes in,) and tells you a long story of conversion; and a hundred to one, if some lie or other slip not out with it. Why the secret meaning is, *I pray admire me*. Hence complains of wants and weaknesses; *pray think what a broken-hearted Christian I am.*' Parable of the ten virgins.

operations of God's Spirit; because they are sensibly not from the persons themselves that are the subjects of them. On the other hand, it is no evidence that affections are gracious, that they are not purposely produced by those, who are the subjects of them, or, that they arise, in their minds, in a manner that they cannot account for.

“There are some, who make this an argument in their own favour; when speaking of what they have experienced, they say, ‘I am sure I did not make it myself, it was a fruit of no contrivance or endeavour of mine; it came when I thought nothing of it; if I might have the world for it, I cannot make it again when I please.’ And hence they determine, that, what they have experienced, must be from the mighty influence of the Spirit of God, and is of a saving nature; but very ignorantly, and without grounds. What they have been the subjects of, may, indeed not be from themselves directly, but may be from the operation of an invisible agent, some spirit besides their own: but it does not thence follow, that it was from the Spirit of God. There are other spirits, who have influence on the minds of men, besides the Holy Ghost. We are directed not to *believe* every spirit, but to *try* the spirits whether they be of God. There are many false spirits, exceedingly busy with men, who often transform themselves into angels of light, and do in many wonderful ways, with great subtilty and power, mimic the operations of the spirit of God.

“Many of Satan’s operations, are very distinguishable from the voluntary exercises of men’s own minds. They are so, in those horrid suggestions, and blasphemous injections, with which he follows many persons; and in vain and fruitless frights and terrors, which he is the author of. And the power of Satan may be as immediate, and as evident in false comforts and joys, as in terrors and suggestions; and oftentimes is so in fact. It is not in men’s power, to put themselves into such raptures, as many raving Enthusiasts have been the subject of. And besides, it is to be considered that persons may have those impressions on their minds, which may not be of their own producing, nor from an evil spirit, but from the Spirit of God; and yet be wholly unacquainted with those ‘better things that accompany salvation,’ spoken of Heb. vi. 9.

V. *“It is no certain sign, that affections are truly holy and spiritual, that they come with texts of scripture, remarkably brought to the mind.*

“It is no sign that affections are not gracious, that they are occasioned by scriptures so coming to the mind; provided it be the scripture itself, or the truth which the scripture so brought contains and teaches, that is the foundation of the affection, and not merely or mainly, the sudden unusual manner of its coming to the mind. But on the other hand, neither is it any sign that affections are gracious, that they arise on occasion of scriptures so brought suddenly and wonderfully to the mind; whether those affec-

tions be fear or hope, joy or sorrow, or any other.

“Some seem to look upon it as a good evidence that their affections are saving, if the affections thus excited, are hope or joy, or any other, which are pleasing and delightful. But then it should be considered, affections may arise from an abuse of the scripture ; and what evidence is there that the devil cannot bring texts of scripture to the mind, and misapply them to deceive persons ? There seems to be nothing in this, which exceeds the power of Satan. And if Satan did presume, and was permitted, to put Christ himself in mind of texts of scripture, to tempt HIM, what reason have we to determine that he dare not, or will not be permitted, to put wicked men in mind of texts of scripture, to tempt and deceive *them* ? And, if Satan may thus abuse one text of scripture, so he may another. Its being a very excellent place of scripture, a comfortable and precious promise, alters not the case, as to his courage or ability. And, if he can bring one comfortable text to the mind, so he may a thousand ; and may choose out such scriptures, as tend most to serve his purpose ; and may heap up scripture promises, tending, according to the perverse application he makes of them, wonderfully to remove the rising doubts, and to confirm the false joy and confidence of a poor deluded sinner. So that it is evident, that persons may have high affections of hope and joy, arising on occasion of texts of scripture coming suddenly

and remarkably to their minds, as though they were spoken to them, and yet this be no argument that these affections are divine, or that they are any other than the effects of Satan's delusion.

“ And, I would further observe, that persons may have raised joyful affections, which may come from the word, and those affections not be from Satan, nor yet from the corruptions of their own hearts, but from some influence of the Spirit of God, with the word, and yet have nothing of the nature of true and saving religion in them. Thus the stony ground hearers had great joy from the word, as growth from a seed; and their affections had in their appearance, a great resemblance, with those from the growth on the good ground, the difference not appearing until it was discovered by the consequences in the time of trial: and yet there was no saving religion in these affections.—Mr. Stoddard, in his *Guide to Christ*, speaks of it as a common thing, for persons while in a natural condition, and before they have ever truly accepted Christ, to have scripture promises come to them with a great deal of refreshing; which they take as tokens of God's love, and hope that God has accepted them; and so are confident of their good estate.

VI. “ *It is no certain evidence that religious affections are saving, that there is an appearance of love in them.*

“ There are no professing christians who pretend, this is an argument against the truth and



saving nature of religious affections : since no-  
 thing is more excellent, heavenly and divine,  
 than a spirit of true christian love to God and  
 men. It is the chief of the graces of God's  
 spirit, and the sum of all true religion. But  
 yet it is ill arguing from hence, that there are  
 no counterfeits of it. The more excellent things  
 are, the more manifold will the counterfeits be,  
 and the more will art and subtilty be display-  
 ed, in an exact imitation of the outward ap-  
 pearance. Thus, there are more counterfeits  
 of silver and gold, than of iron and copper :  
 there are many false diamonds and rubies, but  
 who goes about to counterfeit common stones ?  
 So it is with christian virtues and graces ; the  
 subtilty of Satan, and men's deceitful hearts,  
 are wont chiefly to be exercised in counterfeit-  
 ing those that are in highest repute. Hence  
 there are, perhaps, no graces, that have more  
 counterfeits than love and humility ; these be-  
 ing virtues, wherein the beauty of a christian  
 does especially appear.

"The apostle seems to intimate that there  
 were many in his days, who had a counterfeit  
 love to Christ: says he, 'Grace be with all them,  
 that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.'  
 The last word, in the original, signifies *incor-  
 ruption* ; which shows, that the apostle was sen-  
 sible that there were many who had a kind of  
 love to Christ, whose love was not pure and spi-  
 ritual.

"Persons may seem to have love to God and  
 Christ, yea, to have very strong and violent af-

fections of this nature, and yet have no grace. For this was evidently the case with many graceless Jews, such as cried Jesus up so high, following him day and night, without meat, drink or sleep; such as said, 'Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest,' and cried, 'hosanna to the Son of David.' Mr. Stoddard observes, that some sinners have pangs of affection, and give an account that they find a spirit of love to God, and of their aiming at the glory of God, having that which bears a great resemblance of saving grace.

VII. *"Persons having religious affections of many kinds, accompanying one another, will not determine that they have any gracious affections."*

"Though false religion is wont to be maimed, and not to have that entireness and symmetry of parts, which is to be seen in true religion: yet there may be a great variety of false affections together, that may resemble gracious affections. There are, indeed, counterfeits of all kinds of gracious affections; as, love to God, and love to the brethren; so also of godly sorrow for sin, as in Pharaoh, Saul, and Ahab; and of the fear of the Lord, as in the Samaritans, 'who feared the Lord, and served their own gods at the same time;' and those enemies of God we read of in the Psalms, who, 'through the greatness of God's power, submit themselves to him,' or, as it is in the Hebrew, 'lie unto him,' i. e. yield a counterfeit reverence and submission: so of a gracious gratitude, as in the children of Israel, who sang God's praise

at the Red Sea ; and Naaman the Syrian, after his miraculous cure of his leprosy. So of spiritual joy, as in the stoney-ground hearers, and particularly many of John the Baptist's hearers. So zeal, as in Jehu, and in Paul before his conversion, and the unbelieving Jews. So graceless persons may have earnest religious desires, which may be like Balaam's desires, which he expresses under an extraordinary view, that he had of the happy state of God's people, as distinguished from all the rest of the world. They may also have a strong hope of eternal life, as the Pharisees had.

“It seems commonly the case, that when false affections are raised high, there are many false affections attend each other. The multitude that attended Christ into Jerusalem, after that great miracle of raising Lazarus, seem to be moved with many religious affections at once, and all in a high degree. They seem to be filled with admiration, and there was a shew of an high affection of love, and also of a great degree of reverence, in their laying their garments on the ground for Christ to tread upon ; and also of great gratitude to him, for the great and good works he had wrought, praising him with loud voices for his salvation ; and earnest desires of the coming of God's kingdom, which they supposed Jesus was now about to set up, and shewed great hopes and raised expectations of it, expecting it would immediately appear ; and hence were filled with joy, by which they were so animated in their acclamations, as to

make the whole city ring with the noise of them, and appeared great in their zeal and forwardness to attend Jesus, and assist him without further delay, now in the great feast of the passover, to set up his kingdom. And it is easy, from nature, and the nature of the affections, to give an account why, when one affection is raised very high, that it should excite others; especially if the affection which is raised high, be that of counterfeit love, as it was in the multitude who cried hosanna.

“Since men, therefore, while in a state of nature, are capable of having a resemblance of all kinds of religious affections, and also of having many of them together; it by no means proves, that those who have many kinds of religious affections, are in a renewed or gracious state. Man’s nature may be compared to a tree, with many branches: if the sap in the root be good, there will also be good sap distributed through the branches, and the fruit that is brought forth, will be good and wholesome; but if the sap in the root and stock be poisonous, so it will be in the branches, and the fruit will be deadly. The tree in both cases may be alike; there may be an exact resemblance in shape; but the difference is found only in eating the fruit. It is thus oftentimes between saints and hypocrites. There is sometimes a very great similitude between true and false experience, and in what is expressed and related by the subjects of them: and the difference between them, is much like the difference between the dreams of Pha-

raoh's chief butler and baker; they seemed to be much alike, insomuch that when Joseph interpreted the chief butler's dream, that he should be delivered from his imprisonment, and restored to the king's favour, and his honourable office in the palace, the chief baker had raised hopes and expectations, and told his dream also; but he was wofully disappointed; and though his dream was so much like the happy and well-boding dream of his companion, yet it was quite contrary in its issue.

VIII. *"It is no certain sign, that the religious affections which persons have, are such as have in them the nature of true religion, that they dispose persons to spend much time in religion, and to be zealously engaged in the external duties of worship."*

"It is plain from the scripture, that it is the tendency of true grace to cause persons to delight in religious exercises. But yet, persons being disposed to abound, and to be zealously engaged, in the external exercises of religion, and to spend much time in them, is no sure evidence of grace; because such a disposition is found in many that have no grace. So it was with the Israelites of old, whose services were abominable to God; they attended 'the new moons and sabbaths, and calling of assemblies, and spread forth their hands and made many prayers,' Isa. i. 12, 15. So it was with the Pharisees; they 'made long prayers, and fasted twice a week.' False religion may cause persons to be loud and earnest in prayer: 'Ye

shall not fast as ye do this day, to cause your voice to be heard on high.' Isa. lviii. 4. That religion, which is not spiritual and saving, may cause men to delight in religious duties and ordinances: 'Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God.' Isa. lviii. 2. It may cause them to take delight in hearing the word of God preached; as it was with Ezekiel's hearers. 'And they come unto thee, as the people cometh, and they set before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. And lo, thou art unto them, as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but do them not.' Experience shews, that persons, from false religion, may be inclined to be exceeding abundant in the external exercises of religion and devote almost their whole time to them.

"As there is not (says Bellamy) any one grace but a hypocrite may have its counterfeit, so hypocrites may rise as high in *their* religion, as any true believer does in his. Was Elijah, the prophet, jealous for the name and worship of the true God? so was Jehu: and he appeared as full of zeal, and more courageous and did greater exploits.—And we do not read of one

saint, in all the *Bible*, that fasted twice every week, as the Pharisees did. It is no certain evidence, therefore, that a man is a good man, because he has a *great* deal of religion ; more than the most, and full as much as the best ; yea, more than any in all the country ; for in Jehu's time, there was not perhaps, for a while, one like him upon the face of the earth. A man, therefore, cannot know that he is a good man by the *degree* of his religion, but only from the *special nature* of it."

The same writer, in his *True Religion Delineated*, mentions four sorts of persons, coming into a profession of religion, and having all the outward appearance of it, whose religion is nothing worth.

1. "*The worldly hypocrite* : who makes a profession of religion ; does many things : appears zealous, and pretends to be a good man, merely from worldly considerations and to be seen of men.

2. "*The legal hypocrite* ; whose conversion is nothing else but his leaving off his vicious practices, and turning to be strict and conscientious in external duties ; in hopes thereby to make amends for his past sins, and recommend himself to God ; and so escape hell, and get to heaven.

3. "*The evangelical hypocrite* ; whose conversion was nothing else but this : he was awakened to see his sins, and terrified with fear of hell, and humbled, in a measure, but not thoroughly ; but great light broke into his mind, and

now he believes that Christ loves him, and has pardoned all his sins, and so is filled with joy and zeal, and is become quite another man ; but still has no grace. These usually either fall away to carnal security, or being puffed up with pride, turn enthusiasts.

4. “ *The wild blazing enthusiast* ; whose conversion all arises from *imaginary notions*. He has an imaginary sight of his sin ; his heart ; the wrath of God ; of hell and the devil, and is terribly distressed : and then he sees Christ in a bodily shape, it may be on the cross, or seated on a throne of glory ; he sees a great light shining all around him : hears the angels sing : sees visions, hears voices ; has revelations, and thinks himself one of the very best saints in the world, though, in truth, he soon appears to be seven times more a child of the devil than he was before. However, in his own conceit he knows infallibly that he is right, and all the world cannot convince him to the contrary, Yea, he is fit, at once to be a minister, though ignorant of the first principles of religion ; he is inspired by God, and whoever likes him not is an enemy to Jesus Christ, he doubts not at all. These are the tares the devil sows, by means of whom the ways of God are evilspoken of.

“ Now the several sorts of religion, growing up from their several roots, do all receive a different nourishment, according to their different nature ; through which nourishment they grow and increase ; and though the want of which they decay. *The good man*, the greater sense he has of



God's infinite glory, as he has revealed himself in the law and in the gospel; so proportionably, does his religion flourish and grow in all its various branches, and shine with a heavenly lustre. *The worldly hypocrite* lays out himself most in religion, when there are the most to observe and applaud him. *The legal hypocrite*, when his conscience is most terrified with the thoughts of death, judgment and eternity. *The evangelical hypocrite* has his affections raised, his love, and joy, and zeal, in proportion to his supposed discoveries of the love of Christ to him in particular, and sense of the glories of a (fancied) heaven. And finally, *the blazing enthusiast* is more or less lively in religion, according as he has dreams, hears voices, has impressions and revelations, and is applauded by his party. And, accordingly, those different sorts of religion will grow and thrive the best, under such different sorts of preaching as suits their several natures. And men will cry up those ministers most, whose preaching and conduct agree with their hearts the best. *For all people will walk, every one in the name of his God: And true believers will walk in the name of the LORD their GOD.*

IX. *"It is no certain sign, that affections are right, that they make persons that have them, exceeding confident that what they experience is divine, and that they are in a good estate.*

*"That assurance is not only attainable in some extraordinary cases, but that all christians are directed to give all diligence to make their calling and election sure, fully appears from scrip-*

ture. And it is spoken of as a thing very unbecoming of Christians, and an argument of something very blamable in them, not to know whether Christ be in them or no. And it is manifest, that it was a common thing for the saints, that we have a history or particular account of in the scriptures, to be assured. Therefore it must needs be very unreasonable to determine, that persons are hypocrites, and their affections wrong, because they seem to be out of doubt of their own salvation, and the affections they are the subjects of, seem to banish all fears of hell.

“On the other hand, it is no sufficient reason to determine that men are saints, and their affections gracious, because the affections they have are attended with an exceeding confidence that their state is good, and their affections divine. Nothing can be certainly argued from this confidence, how great and strong soever it seems to be. If we see a man that boldly calls God his father, and commonly speaks in the most bold, familiar, and appropriating language in prayer, ‘My father, my dear Redeemer, my sweet Saviour, my Beloved!’ and the like; and it is a common thing for him to use the most confident expressions before men, about the goodness of his state; such as, ‘I know certainly that God is my father; I know so surely as there is a God in heaven, that he is my God; I know I shall go to heaven, as well as if I were there;’ such things are no signs at all that it is indeed so, as he is confident it is. Such

an overbearing, high handed, and violent sort of confidence as this, so affecting to declare itself with a most glaring show in the sight of men, has not the countenance of a true Christian assurance : it savours more of the spirit of the Pharisees, who never doubted but that they were saints, and the most eminent of saints, and were bold to go to God, and come up near to him, and lift up their eyes, and thank him for the great distinction he had made between them and other men ; and when Christ intimated that they were blind and graceless, they despised the suggestion, saying unto him, ' Are we blind also.'

" If we do but consider what the hearts of natural men are, what principles they are under the dominion of, what blindness and deceit, what self-flattery, self-exaltation and self-confidence reigns there ; we need not at all wonder that their high opinion of themselves, and confidence of their happy circumstances, should be as high and strong as mountains, and as violent as a tempest, when once conscience is blinded, and conviction killed, with false, high affections, and those fore-mentioned principles let loose, fed and prompted by false joys and comforts, excited by some pleasing imaginations impressed by Satan, transforming himself into an angel of light. When once a hypocrite is thus established, in a false hope, he has not those things to cause him to call his hope in question, that oftentimes are the occasion of the doubting of true saints ; he has not that

cautious spirit, that great sense of the vast importance of a sure foundation, and that dread of being deceived. False comforts put an end to a cautious spirit, and dreadfully stupify the mind; and a false hope hides corruption, covers it all over, and the hypocrite looks clean and bright in his own eyes."

Mr. Bellamy, speaking of a sort of people which he calls evangelical hypocrites, says; "The essence of their first act of faith, consists in a firm persuasion that their sins are forgiven. This faith, from a principle of self-love, naturally fills them full of joy, and love, and zeal, and lays the foundation of all their good frames, and all their religion. Doubting the goodness of their state, when they are dead and carnal, is, in their account, unbelief, and a great sin, and to be watched and prayed against, as a thing of the most destructive tendency. And here I may observe, 1st. That the greater discoveries, (as they call them,) they have, the more proud and conceited they are, and the more do they want to have all the town admire them. 2d. The longer they continue to be *lively*, the more do they grow in pride and self-righteousness; and feeling themselves to be exceedingly good, they are emboldened to make very free with the Almighty, as being his peculiar favourites, and the best of men, 'God, I thank thee, I am not as other men.' 3d. It is impossible to convince them of their error; because the immediate witness of the spirit, as they think, assures them that they are right:

and they are bound to believe God before man. 4th. Urge *Scripture* against them, and they are unmoved ; because the spirit does not tell them that it means so. Or, if they are sometimes shaken, and almost convinced, yet they are in a few days, more settled than ever, by a new discovery, and a multitude of scriptures misapplied by the prince of darkness, assuring them that they are right. And now they resolve never to doubt again, and get invincibly set in their way. Or, if they are terrified at any time, and begin to doubt, *O thou of little faith, wherefore dost thou doubt?* or some such scripture, will quiet and hush all to sleep again. And thus, and after this sort, things go with them."

Hall, in his *Help to Zion's travellers*, speaking of those who make saving faith to consist in believing their state is good, observes, "The bands of such are generally made strong by the joy that accompanies their confidence ; for taking it for granted their faith is right, they apply to themselves the promises of salvation, and think it would be a sin to doubt of their safety, and a much greater, to cast away their confidence ; which they apprehend will meet with a great recompence of reward. Such despise all evidences of a change of heart ; their maxim is, the weaker the evidence, the stronger the faith.

"It is possible, (continues he,) some may hold fast their self-deception, and go down to hell with a lie in their right hand, rejoicing in a thing of nought ; for a hope of deliverance

from punishment cannot fail of giving pleasure to its possessors ; and while the pleasing expectation is supported, the degree of consolation arising from a false hope, may be equal, yea, superior to what is produced by a good one."

He further adds, " We ought seriously to consider from what our comforts spring, and in what they terminate, in order to know and judge of their true nature and kind. An unsanctified soul will rejoice in the hope of a deliverance from the punishment of sin, simply from the principle of self love. But mere safety does not satisfy the truly gracious—they want to have the *power* of sin subdued, and the *pollution* of sin removed—their habitual cry to God is, *take away all iniquity.*"

Mr. Edwards, speaking of these evangelical hypocrites, says, " Their confidence in one sense, is much more immoveable than a truly gracious assurance ; a true assurance is not upheld, but by the soul's being kept in a holy frame, and grace maintained in exercise. If the actings of grace do much decay in the Christian, and he falls into a lifeless frame, he loses his assurance : but this kind of confidence of hypocrites will not be shaken by sin ; they (at least some of them) will maintain their boldness in their hope, in the most corrupt frames and wicked ways ; which is a sure evidence of their delusion.

" And here (continues Mr. Edwards) I cannot but observe, that there are certain doctrines

often preached to people, which need to be delivered with more caution and explanation than they frequently are; for as they are by many understood, they tend greatly to establish the delusion and false confidence of hypocrites. The doctrines I speak of, are those of 'Christians living by faith, not by sight; their giving glory to God, by trusting him in the dark; living upon Christ;' &c. which are excellent and important doctrines indeed, rightly understood, but corrupt and destructive, as many understand them. To exhort men confidently to trust in God, and so hold up their hope and peace, though they are not in a gracious frame, and continue still to be so, is the same thing in effect, as to exhort them confidently to trust in God, but not with a gracious trust: and what is that but a wicked presumption?

"It is true, that God's people ought to trust in him when the aspects of his providence are dark, and look as though God had forsaken them, and did not hear their prayers, and many clouds gather, many enemies surround them, with a formidable aspect, threatening to swallow them up, and all events of providence seem to be against them, and all circumstances seem to render the promises of God difficult to be fulfilled, so if persons believe, they must hope against hope. Thus the ancient Patriarchs, Job, Jeremiah, Daniel, the three children, and the apostle Paul, gave glory to God, by trusting to God in darkness. And we have many instances of such a glorious victorious faith in the

eleventh of the Hebrews. But how different a thing is this, from trusting in God without spiritual sight, and being at the same time in a dead, and carnal frame.

“Those that thus insist on persons living by faith, when they have no experience, and are in very bad frames, are also very absurd in their notions of faith. What they mean by faith is, believing that they are in a good estate. Hence, they count it a dreadful sin for them to doubt of their state, whatever frames they are in, and whatever wicked things they do, because it is the great and heinous sin of unbelief; and he is the best man, and puts most honor upon God, that maintains his hope of his good estate the most confidently and immovably, when he has the least light or experience; that is to say, when he is in the worst and wickedest frame and way; because, forsooth, that is a sign that he is strong in faith, giving glory to God, and against hope, believes in hope. But what Bible do they learn this notion of faith out of, that it is a man’s confidently believing that he is in a good estate? If this be faith, the Pharisees had faith in an eminent degree: some of which, Christ teaches, committed the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost. The scripture represents faith, as that, by which men are brought into a good estate; and therefore it cannot be the same thing, as believing that they are already in a good estate. To suppose that faith consists in persons believing that they are already in a good estate, is in effect the



same thing as to suppose that faith consists in a person's believing that he has faith, or believing that he believes.

“Men are doubtless to blame for being in a dead carnal frame ; but when they are in such a frame, and have no sensible experience of the exercises of grace, but on the contrary, are much under the prevalence of their corruptions and an antichristian spirit, they are not to blame for doubting of their state. It is impossible, in the nature of things, that a holy and christian hope should be kept alive, in its clearness and strength, in such circumstances, as it is to keep the light in the room, when the candle is put out ; or to maintain the bright sun in the air, when the sun is gone down. Distant experiences, when darkened by present prevailing corruption, never keep alive a gracious confidence and assurance ; but that sickens and decays upon it, as necessarily as a little child by repeated blows on the head with a hammer. Nor is it at all to be lamented, that persons doubt of their state in such circumstances : but on the contrary, it is desirable and every way best that they should. It is agreeable to that wise and merciful constitution of the things which God has established, that it should be so. For so hath God contrived and constituted things in his dispensations towards his own people, that when their love decays, and the exercises of it fail or become weak, fear should arise ; for then they need it to restrain them from sin, and excite them to care for the good

of their souls, and so to stir them up to watchfulness and diligence ; but God has so ordered, that when love rises and is in vigorous exercise, then fear should vanish and be driven away ; for then they need it not, having a higher and more excellent principle in exercise, to restrain them from sin, and stir them up to their duty.

“ There are no other principles which human nature is under the influence of, that will ever make men conscientious, but one of these two, FEAR OR LOVE ; and therefore, if one of these should not prevail as the other decays, God’s people, when fallen into dead frames, when love is asleep, would be lamentably exposed indeed. And therefore God has wisely ordained, that these two opposite principles of love and fear should rise and fall, like the two opposite scales of a balance ; when one rises the other sinks. As light and darkness necessarily and unavoidably succeed each other ; if light prevails, so much does darkness cease, and no more ; and if light decays, so much does darkness prevail : so it is in the heart of a child of God : if divine love decays and falls asleep, and corruption prevails, the light of joy and hope goes out, and dark fear and doubting arises ; and if, on the contrary, divine love prevails and comes into lively exercise, this brings in the brightness of hope, and drives away black corruption, and fear with it. Love is the spirit of adoption, or the childlike principle : if that slumbers, men fall under fear, which is the spirit of bondage,

or the servile principle ; and so on the contrary, if it be so, that love, or the spirit of adoption, be carried to a great height, it quite drives away all fear, and gives full assurance agreeable to that of the apostle, ‘ There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear ?’ These two opposite principles of corrupt desire and holy love, bring hope and fear into the heart, in proportion as they prevail ; that is, when left to their own natural influence, without something adventitious, or accidental intervening ; as the distemper of melancholy, doctrinal ignorance, prejudices of education, wrong instruction, false principles, peculiar temptations, &c.

“ Fear is cast out by the spirit of God, no other way than by the prevailing of love : nor is it ever maintained by his Spirit, when love is asleep. At such a time, in vain is all the saint’s self-examination, and poring over past experience, in order to establish his peace, and get assurance. For it is contrary to the nature of things, as God hath constituted them, that he should have assurance at such a time. They therefore do directly thwart God’s wise and gracious constitution of things, who exhort others to be confident in their hope, when in dead frames ; under a notion of living by faith, and not ‘ by sight, and trusting God in the dark, and living upon Christ and not upon experiences ;’ and warn them not to doubt of their good estate, lest they should be guilty of the dreadful sin of unbelief. And it has a direct tendency to establish the most presumptu-

ous hypocrites, and to prevent their ever calling their state in question, how much soever wickedness rages, and reigns in their hearts, and prevails in their lives ; under a notion of honouring God by hoping against hope, and confidently trusting in God, when things look very dark. And doubtless vast has been the mischief that has been done in this way.

“ Persons cannot be said to live on their experiences, merely because they take them and use them as evidences of grace ; for there are no other evidences, that they can or ought to take. But persons may be said to live upon their experiences, when they make a righteousness of them, and turn their eyes off from God’s glory and Christ’s excellency, on to themselves, to entertain their minds, by viewing their own attainments, and high experiences, and the great things they have met with, and are bright and beautiful in their own eyes, and are rich and increased with goods in their own apprehensions, and think that God has as admiring an esteem of them on the same account, as they have of themselves : this is living on experiences, and not on Christ ; and is more abominable in the sight of God, than the gross immoralities of those who make no pretences to religion.”

As an exalted opinion of our own experiences and attainments in religion, is the very essence of spiritual pride, it may be proper here to remark, that spiritual pride originates wholly in self love : and, in short, it is self love that

has been the fruitful source of all the sin that has ever been committed in heaven or on earth, and it will continue to be so, to the end of time. It was through self love the angels sinned and lost their habitation in heaven; and how many bring condemnation and ruin upon themselves through this same principle in the present day. I will here transcribe an interesting passage from an ancient writer.

“All self love is of the devil, and was his apostacy, by which he fell from heaven, and for which he was worthily driven thence. For when God had created *Lucifer* the most beautiful angel, and adorned him with most excellent gifts of wisdom, light, and glory, and spiritual riches, he began to admire himself in his gifts, as a peacock doth admire his fine feathers, and to love, honour and praise himself; which thing was the first step to his ruin, namely, to give honour to himself, not to God, and to turn his love from God to himself; and hereupon he was worthily cast out of heaven with all his companions, whom his pride and self love by contagion had infected.” Says Fenelon, “Whoever regards with complacency and as his own property, the graces he has received from God, converts them into poison.” The former writer continues, “This you may learn from the most deplorable example of prince *Lucifer*, than whom a fairer and more beautiful angel heaven had not; but who when he vilified the gifts of God with his own honour and self love, and did not

purely in all these, respect the love and glory of God, by his own act became a devil, and was cast down hereupon from heaven."

To return from this digression, I come to the last thing to be mentioned as no certain evidence of a renewed or gracious state.

X. *"Nothing can certainly be concluded concerning the nature of religious affections, that any are the subjects of, from this, that the outward manifestations of them, and the relation persons give of them are very affecting and pleasing to the truly godly, and such as greatly gain their charity and win their hearts."*

"When there are many probable appearances of piety in others, it is the duty of the saints to receive them cordially into their charity, and to love them and rejoice in them, as their brethren in Christ Jesus. But yet the best of men may be deceived, when the appearances seem to them exceedingly fair and bright, even so as entirely to gain their charity, and conquer their hearts. And this we need not wonder at, if we consider the things that have already been observed; what things it has been shown, may appear in men who are altogether graceless. Nothing hinders, but that all these things afore mentioned may meet together in men, and yet they be without a spark of grace in their hearts. They may have religious affections of many kinds together; they may have a sort of affection towards God, that bears a great resemblance of dear love to him; and so a kind of love to

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the brethren, and sorrow for sin, and revered submission, self abasement, gratitude, joy, religious longings, and zeal for religion and the good of souls. And these affections may come after great awakenings and convictions of conscience; and there may be great appearances of a work of humiliation, and counterfeit love and joy, and other affections may seem to follow these, and one another, just in the same order that is commonly observable in the holy affections of true converts. And these religious affections may be carried to a great height, and may cause abundance of tears, yea, may overcome the nature of those, who are the subjects of them, and may make them affectionate, and fervent, and fluent in speaking of the things of God, and dispose them to be abundant in it: and may be attended with many sweet texts of scripture, and precious promises, brought with great impression on their minds; and may dispose them with their mouths to praise and glorify God, in a very ardent manner, and frequently to call upon others to praise him, crying of their unworthiness, and extolling free grace. And may moreover, dispose them to abound in the external duties of religion, such as prayer, hearing the word preached, singing, and religious conference, and these things, attended with a great resemblance of a Christian assurance in its greatest height, when the saints mount on eagle's wings, above all darkness and doubt-

ing. I think it has been made plain, that there may be all these things, and yet there be nothing more than the common influences of the Spirit of God, joined with the delusions of satan, and the wicked and deceitful heart.

“It is with professors of religion, especially such as become so in a time of outpouring of the spirit of God, as it is with blossoms in the spring; there are vast numbers of them upon trees, which look fair and promising; but yet many of them never come to any thing. And many of those, that in a little time wither up, and drop off, and rot under the trees; yet for a while look as beautiful and as gay as others; and not only so, but smell sweet and send forth a pleasant odour; so that we cannot, by any of our senses, certainly distinguish those blossoms which have in them that secret virtue, and that inward solidity and strength which will enable them to bear, and cause them to be perfected by the hot summer sun, that will dry up the others. It is the mature fruit which comes afterwards, and not the beautiful colours and smell of the blossoms, that we must judge by. So new converts, (professedly so,) in their talk about things of religion, may appear fair, and be very savoury, and the saints may think they talk feelingly. They may relish their talk, and imagine they perceive a divine savour in it, and yet all may come to nothing. ‘All saving graces in the saints (says Flavel,) have their counterfeits in hypocrites; there are similar works in those, which a spiritual and very judi-



cious eye may easily mistake for the saving and genuine effects of a sanctifying spirit.' In many cases it was impossible for the priest to determine whether a man had the leprosy, or whether he were clean, by the most narrow inspection of the appearances that were upon him, until he had waited to see what the appearances would come to, and had shut up the person who showed himself to him, one seven days after another."

I cannot omit inserting in this place, some extracts from the preface to the work I have already so largely extracted from ; as we shall thereby be enabled to see what multitudes rest in something short of a true renovation of heart, and the injury done to the cause of Christ by counterfeit or false religion.

"It is no new thing (observes this writer) that much false religion should prevail, at a time of great reviving of religion ; and that at such a time multitudes of hypocrites should spring up among true saints. It was so in that great reformation, and revival of religion, that was in Josiah's time ; as appears by Jer. iii. 10, and iv. 3, 4. and also by the great apostacy that there was in the land, so soon after his reign. So it was in that great out-pouring of the spirit upon the Jews, that was in the days of John the Baptist ; as appears by the great apostacy of that people, so soon after so general an awakening, and the temporary religious comforts and joys of many who 'were willing for a season to rejoice in his light.' So it was

in those great commotions that were among the multitude, occasioned by the preaching of Jesus Christ; of the many that were called, but few were chosen; of the multitude that were roused and affected by his preaching, and at one time or other appeared mightily engaged, full of admiration of Christ, and elevated with joy, but few were true disciples, that stood the shock of the great trials that came afterwards, and endured to the end: many were like the stony ground or thorny ground; and but few, comparatively, like the good ground. Of the whole heap that was gathered, great part was chaff, that the wind afterwards drove away; and the heap of wheat that was left, was comparatively small; as appears abundantly, by the history of the New Testament. So it was in that great out-pouring of the spirit that was in the apostle's days; as appears by Gal. iii. -1. and iv 11, 15. Phil. ii. 21. and iii. 18, 19.; and the two epistles to the Corinthians, and many other parts of the New Testament. And so it was in the great reformation from Popery, and others that might be mentioned.\*

“Not that it is to be supposed that it will always be so; for it is evident, that there will come a time of much greater purity in the

\* It is with out-pourings of the spirit and revivals of religion often much like showers of rain upon the earth. During the time of the shower you will see water all around, and even the hills and highest places appear soft and wet; but shortly after it is over, they become dry and hard, and only here and there a pond of water is to be seen. The reason is, except in a very few places it had no depth.

church of God, than has been in ages past: and one great reason of it will be, that at that time, God will give much greater light to his people, to distinguish between true religion and its counterfeits; for he shall purify, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness; and then shall they return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked: between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not.

“It is by the mixture of counterfeit religion with true, not discerned and distinguished, that the devil has had his greatest advantage against the cause and kingdom of Christ, all along, hitherto. It is plainly by this means, principally, that he has prevailed against all revivings of religion, that ever have been, since the founding of the christian church. By this, he hurt the cause of christianity, in, and after the apostolic age, much more than by all the persecutions of both Jews and heathens: the apostles, in all their epistles, shew themselves much more concerned at the former mischief, than the latter. By this, Satan prevailed against the reformation, begun by Luther, Zuinglius, &c. to put a stop to its progress, and bring it into disgrace; ten times more, than by all those bloody, cruel, and before unheard of persecutions of the church of Rome: and by this principally has he prevailed against all revivals of religion, that have been since the reformation.

“And so it is likely ever to be in the church, whenever religion revives remarkably, till we

have learned well to distinguish between *true* and *false* religion, between saving affections and experiences, and those manifold fair shews, and glistening appearances by which they are counterfeited ; the consequences of which, when they are not distinguished, are often inexpressibly dreadful. By this means, the devil gratifies himself, by bringing it to pass, that that which is offered to God, by multitudes, under a notion of a pleasing acceptable service to him, is indeed above all things abominable unto him. By this means, he deceives great multitudes about the state of their souls ; making them think they are something, when they are nothing ; and so eternally undoes them ; and not only so, but establishes many in a strong confidence of their eminent holiness, who are in God's sight some of the vilest hypocrites. By this means, he many ways damps and wounds religion in the hearts of the saints, obscures and deforms it by corrupt mixtures, causes their religious affections wofully to degenerate, and dreadfully ensnares and confounds the minds of others of the saints, and brings them into great difficulties and temptations, and entangles them in a wilderness, out of which they can by no means extricate themselves. By this means, Satan mightily encourages the hearts of open enemies of religion, and strengthens their hands, and fills them with weapons, and makes strong their fortresses ; when, at the same time, religion

and the church, lie exposed to them, as a city without walls. By this means, he brings it to pass, that men work wickedness, under a notion of doing God service, and so sin without restraint, yea, with earnest forwardness and zeal, and with all their might. By this means, he brings in even the friends of religion, insensibly to themselves, to do the work of enemies, by destroying religion in a far more effectual manner than open enemies can do, under a notion of advancing it. By this means, the devil scatters the flock of Christ, and sets them one against another, and that with great heat of spirit, under a notion of zeal for God ; and religion by degrees, degenerates into vain jangling ; and during the strife, Satan leads both parties far out of the right way, driving each to great extremes, one on the right hand and the other on the left, according as he finds they are most inclined, or most easily moved and swayed, till the right path in the middle is almost wholly neglected. And in the midst of this confusion, the devil has great opportunity to advance his own interest, and make it strong in ways innumerable, and get the government of all into his own hands, and work his own will. And by what is seen of the terrible consequences of this counterfeit religion, when not distinguished from true, God's people in general have their minds unhinged and unsettled, in things of religion, and know not where to set their feet, or what to think or do ; and

many are brought into doubts, whether there be any thing at all in religion; and heresy, and infidelity, and atheism greatly prevail.

“Therefore, it greatly concerns us to use our utmost endeavours, clearly to discern, and have it well settled and established, wherein true religion does consist. Till this be done, it may be expected, that great revivings of religion will be but of short continuance: till this be done, there is but little good to be expected of all our debates, in conversation and from the press, not knowing clearly and distinctly what we ought to contend for.”

#### CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS TO PART I.

It will be perceived, from what has gone before, that not only those who are brought to respect religion, observe its precepts, and diligently attend the word; may nevertheless be wholly unacquainted with the saving operations of the spirit of God; but we shall also perceive, that there is no conclusive evidence that those are *born again*, who put on the most ardent zeal, think themselves the chief of saints, and are forward to declare the goodness of the Lord, praise him aloud, and make the greatest possible show of religion. A clamorous, loud and boisterous spirit, is indeed always to be looked upon, rather as an unfavorable mark than otherwise. It is often, too much like the abundant and forward praises of a de-

ceitful friend, (such as we often meet with in our journeyings through life,) and it but ill accords with the meekness and simplicity of the gospel of the lowly Jesus. All these great appearances of religion, are frequently, only the activity or workings of the creaturely and unsanctified part of man, influenced by causes entirely aside from the spirit of God. The corrupted Jews, on fasting, caused their voices to be heard on high : and the Pharisees no doubt prayed loud, as well as long. And see how Baal's prophets cried out unto Baal ; how they leaped upon the altar ; and through the earnestness of their zeal, cut themselves with knives, till the blood gushed out. All these characters, now, were blind, deluded, and depraved. Publicans and harlots, were less an abomination unto the Lord than they were, after all their zeal and great show of religion.

The tree, we are told, is to be known by its fruit. But, if loud speaking, long prayers, and a great outward show of religion, were to be taken for the fruit of a right heart and spirit ; the false prophets in old time, and the worshippers of Baal, must have been very good people ; for, they really exceeded the true worshippers in these things : and the Scribes and Pharisees, moreover, must have had a great deal of religion. The truth is, Satan does not care how much people pray, sing, preach, or profess, or how much they attend to the externals of religion, if he can only keep possession of the heart, and inspire them with false zeal,

bigotry, and self love. Indeed, these things are, above every thing else, calculated to establish his kingdom in the earth, and bring all pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father into entire neglect, or cause it to be trodden under foot of men.

Some there are, in the present day, who may be said, I think, to carry things with a high hand. Not to call their prayers vain repetitions, and compare those who make them to the ignorant heathen who expected to be heard for their much speaking, they appear as if dictating to the Almighty, in their addresses to him; telling him what to do, and in what manner to do it; and insisting to have it done immediately; just now; even commanding and ordering him, as if he were the servant, and they the supreme.\* Now what allowance may be made for people's ignorance, I know not, but I seriously fear, these characters will be brought to tremble, when they approach the tribunal of that God, whom they have so often addressed without any proper reverence or respect. I have seldom seen such persons bring forth good fruit—they are generally found to be arbitrary, headstrong and passionate, conceited and violent; and it is well known, that many of them have been living in the grossest sins, at the

\* "There is (says Mr. Edwards) in some persons a most unsuitable and insufferable boldness, in their addresses to the great Jehovah; the very thoughts of which would make them shrink into nothing, with horror and confusion, if they saw the distance that is between God and them."



very time they were going on in this way ; for in common, they have but little power over sin. Indeed it cannot be supposed the Lord will grant his blessings to persons like these—they do not approach his throne as penitent suppliants, but as persons of great consequence, and as persons that he has no right to reject. To make a great clamor and noise, causing the voice to be heard afar off, and to be very forward to take upon one's self the external acts or performances of religion, betrays a want of that modesty, meekness, and humility, which seems inseparably connected with the spirit of the gospel.

It is dangerous, as well as sinful, to rush into the presence of the Lord without consideration, or present ourselves before him, by way of serving him with sparks of our own kindling. As a proof of this, let us remember the case of Nadab and Abihu. Though sons of Aaron, and ordained priests to wait before the Lord, yet for offering *strange fire* upon the Lord's altar, they were both struck dead. So again, Saul, the king of Israel, for offering a sacrifice was rejected by the Lord, though he thought he must do it, and accordingly forced himself and did it, 1 Samuel xiii. 9. These things ought to be a warning to others in the present day, who in many respects appear to resemble them ; but they will take no warning, and will be apt to cry out against the one that testifies these things from a sense of duty.

No, remember reader, whosoever thou may-

eat be, that something beside many prayers, fervency, praising God, shew of love, false zeal, and sparks of our own kindling, must be found in us, or, after all, we shall be accounted workers of iniquity. The true seed of the kingdom is different from all this. The description given of our Saviour, strongly marks that religion he came to set up in the earth. "Behold my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved in whom my soul delighteth; I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall show judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry nor strive, neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets."—This way did not suit the loud and high professors in our Saviour's time; there was not outward show enough in it for them, and they rejected him. But in his name could the Gentiles trust. Wisdom is justified by all her children. This was the grand trait of him that was true and faithful, *It was his meat and drink to do the will of his heavenly Father.*

I expect many high, hypocritical professors, will never forgive me, to the day of my death, for what I have testified against them; and for exposing them to the world in their true character. But false religion I cannot away with. I must raise my voice against it, if every body else cry it up to the skies, and sacrifice to its altar. I am called, according to the best light I have, to separate between the *precious* and the *vile*, and I must not swerve from my calling, if I am opposed by every one. Whoever reads with candour, must perceive, that I do not utter

a sentence against religion that is pure and undefiled—to promote this is my whole concern. But high minded, deceitful, selfish professors, who are manifestly destitute of the spirit of the gospel, I cannot flatter or represent as saints, if I am put to death for refusing to do it. I consider them as the worst of men. It is through them that religion suffers, and until they are set forth in their true character, and condemned as hypocrites, religion will never make any progress in the world. Thousands, from their high profession, will look upon them as saints, follow their example, and reject every sentiment, and every way not accordant with their practice, or their views; and like all other carnal men, (for whatever they may profess, they are only carnal) they will forever discard, and would, were it possible, entirely banish every thing that appertains to pure and undefiled religion, from off the face of the earth; and such may be their blindness or delusion, that they may esteem themselves, at the same time, more religious than almost any other people.

It is surprising into what a state of delusion people may get, believing themselves to be great saints, when they are quick of resentment, clamorous at their houses, and destitute of almost every good quality. The longer I live, the more I am convinced, that all high, clamorous, blustering, shouting professors, have little or no true religion. Their fruit shows it to be the case. They are almost always subject to

strong passions, given to deceit, and frequently, at the very time they are making such high professions, it is ascertained with certainty, that they are living in the practices of known, and sometimes even heinous sins. Some of these sort of people have been brought to see themselves, and have afterwards confessed to me, that they never had less power over sin, than when they were in this way; and yet, strange to relate, they looked upon themselves all the while as the chief of saints; and thought nothing of some others, who were tenfold more conscientious, and brought forth much better fruit, but who were less noisy. These people are not in general, perhaps, so much attempting to deceive others as they are deceived themselves; for, being ignorant of the acceptable will of the Lord, they do not perceive, that true religion shows itself in sincere obedience to the Lord, in keeping an eye single to his glory, and seeking to overcome every wrong temper, desire and propensity out of the heart, and to please the Lord in all things from day to day.

That people may be carried away with pleasing ecstasies, feel abundance of joy and peace, and have the most ravishing views of the glory and happiness of the other world, and still be destitute of any solid work of grace on their hearts, has already been shewn; and will further appear, by the following extract from a discourse of Mr. John Smith. Speaking of a sort of Christians, whose life is nothing but a strong energy of fancy, he says; "Lest their

religion might too grossly discover itself to be nothing else but a piece of art, there may be sometimes such extraordinary motions stirred up within them, that they may seem to be a true operation of the divine life; when yet all this is nothing else but the energy of their own self love, touched with some fleshly apprehensions of divine things, and excited by them. There are such things in our christian religion, when a carnal, unhallowed mind takes the chair, and gets the expounding of them, as may seem very delicious to the fleshly appetites of men: such are the magnificent titles of sons of God, and heirs of heaven, overflowing streams of joy and pleasure that blessed souls shall swim in to all eternity, a glorious paradise in the world to come, a new Jerusalem paved with gold, comprehending in its vast circuit such numberless varieties, that a busy curiosity may spend itself about to all eternity. I doubt not but that sometimes the most fleshly and earthly men, may be so ravished with the conceits of such things as these, that they may seem to be made partakers of the powers of the world to come. Thus may these blazing comets rise up above the moon, and climb higher than the sun; which yet, because they have no solid consistence of their own, and are of a base and earthly alloy, will soon vanish and fall down again, being only borne up by an external force. They may seem to themselves to have attained higher than those noble christians that are gently moved by the natural force of true

goodness : they seem to be *pleniores Deo*, (i. e. more full of God) than those that are really informed and actuated by the divine spirit, and do move on steadily and constantly in the way towards heaven. As the seed that was sown in the stony ground, grew up, and lengthened out its blade faster, than that which was sown in the good and fruitful soil. And as the motions of our sense and fancy, and passions, are many times more vigorous, and make stronger impressions upon us than those of the higher powers of the soul, which are more remote from these mixed animal perceptions; that devotion which is there seated, may seem to have more energy and life in it, than that which gently, and with a more delicate kind of touch, spreads itself upon the understanding, and from thence mildly derives itself through our wills and affections. True religion is no boiling up of our imaginative powers, nor the glowing heats of the passions; though these are too often mistaken for it: but it is a new nature, a godlike frame of spirit, discovering itself most of all in deep humility, meekness, self-denial, universal love to God and all true goodness, without partiality and without hypocrisy, whereby we are taught to know God, and knowing him, to love him and conform ourselves as much as may be to all that perfection that shines in him."

The religion of some I have seen seems much like a fire produced by combustible materials, which for a time burns furiously and

makes a great blaze, so as to attract the notice of all around ; but shortly consuming the fuel, it goes out, and there is no longer either blaze or heat. The judgment is seldom informed, much less is the nature changed, after all these animated views and ecstatic feelings. Says the pious lady Guion, "Ecstasies arise from a sensible relish, and may be termed a kind of spiritual sensuality, wherein the soul letting itself go too far, by reason of the sweetness it finds in them, falls imperceptibly into decay. The crafty enemy presents such sort of interior elevations and raptures to trepan the soul ; to render it sensual, to fill it with vanity and self love, and to hinder it from following Jesus Christ in the way of renunciation and death to all things."

Such is the blindness or folly of some people, that these elevations and rapturous sensations, are the chief things they seek after—they are the principal desire of their hearts ; and if, on going to meeting, their minds are not worked up into these things, it is a meeting lost to them. If Christ himself had spoken, they could not suppose they had been profited, or had got any good whatever—neither would it, perhaps, have been the case, while their eye was only after such things.

This sort of religion generally wears out in a few years, and leaves its possessor in a most uncomfortable condition ; or, should it be kept up in some during their whole life, it will not perhaps be any better with them in the other

world ; for these things will weigh but light, I fear, in the balances of the sanctuary. If these people are sincere, as many of them I hope are, I pity their blindness in not seeing what properly belongs to the christian to seek after ; for these things assuredly are not what the christian should seek after.

A pious and sensible writer, speaking of the sinfulness of seeking after high affections, immediately and for their own sake, says, "To seek after these things directly, and to have the heart principally set upon them, is to place them in the room of God and his glory. If they be sought that others may take notice of, and admire us for our spirituality and forwardness in religion, it is then abominable pride : If for the sake of feeling the pleasure which accompanies these affections, it is then idolatry, and self gratification." Now, what a christian ought, and what I believe every true christian does principally seek after, is a greater conformity to the divine image, to be more like unto Christ, to be more meek, humble and resigned, and to adorn the gospel in all things. If he could do this, he would be willing to forego all pleasurable sensations whatever, for he desires no other satisfaction, than to be enabled to do the Lord's will continually and in all things.

For want of knowing what true religion is, many are the absurdities into which men in all ages and of all persuasions have gone. Some have had the most elevated raptures and sensa-



tions, causing them to shout, sing, and declare aloud the praises of the Lord, when at the same time they have been wholly destitute of any true inward grace, transforming them into the divine image, and rendering them truly conscientious and upright: whilst others have been very strict, rigid and zealous, in all the outward duties of religion, spending a great part of their time in attending to its exercises, and have nevertheless been far removed from every principle of the gospel of the lowly Jesus. The Roman Catholics, in countries mostly Catholic, spend more time in keeping saint days, saying mass, &c. than people in this country have any idea of; and in point of zeal, they are perhaps behind no community of people in existence.

A person of my acquaintance, who was at Marseilles, previous to the French revolution, told me it was often the case, that there were not more than two or three days in the week, that the people did any sort of work; the remainder being days of devotion, or saint days. And on a certain time, when the host or image of our Saviour was carried along through the streets, as usual on such occasions, the people dropped on their knees before it, as it passed them, [unless a person drops down at such a time, he is sure to be immediately knocked down]. A man belonging to the same vessel with my acquaintance, from North Carolina, who had never been in a Catholic country before, seeing the people drop down on their

knees, right in a muddy street, and not knowing what to make of it, burst out into a laugh. In an instant a Catholic from the company, full of zeal for the contempt shewn to his religion, drew a rapier, and sprang after him with all the rage and fury of a demon; and would no doubt have killed him, had he not jumped off the wharf as he was pursued, and swam on board the vessel at anchor before the town. Nor did he venture to put his foot on the land again, during the time the vessel staid there. What zeal now there was in this man—but it was a zeal not only without knowledge, but evidently inspired by the powers of darkness.

But it is not merely such corrupted zeal as this, that will be rejected of the Lord: but whatsoever we do in our own spirit, and in our own natures, will come short of acceptance before God. Says an ancient and very pious writer; “Nothing is accepted from us with the Father, but what his Son doth in us: Be they never such glorious actions, and done with never so specious pretences, yet if they be our actions, there is nothing in them acceptable. When our services are not from an internal principle, from the work of the eternal spirit, from a new nature, all such services are dead works, and all our zeal therein is but as strange fire in the Lord’s sacrifices:—It must be his Son’s work in us, else he loathes all; even the best of our sacrifices; If it be not Jesus Christ in us that doeth all, viz. that loves God, and fears God, and obeys God, and believes in

God, his Father regards it not; God accepts his own work in us and nothing else.”\*

Wm. Law, speaking of such as make a profession of religion, but in whom the seed of the kingdom has never grown up, says, “Their *religion* is no more from heaven than their *fine breeding*; their *cares* have no more goodness in them, than their *pleasures*; their *love* is worth no more than their *hatred*; their zeal for this, or against that form of religion, has only the nature of any other worldly contention in it. And thus it is, and must be with every natural man, whatever appearances he may put on—he is the slave and machine of his own corrupt tempers and inclinations, and enlightened, inspired, quickened and animated by self-love, self-esteem, and self-seeking, which is the only life and spirit of the mere natural man, whether he be *Heathen, Jew or Christian*.”

The Lord estimates actions according to the principle whence they proceed. Hence it was that the Saviour said, the poor widow hath cast in more than they all. If ambition, self-love, or a regard to a good name, inspire us to do what we do, it will find no acceptance in the sight of God.† Says an author of the last cen-

\* Agreeable to this is that passage of Scripture in Isaiah, “Thou wilt ordain peace for us, for thou O Lord hast wrought all our works in us.”

† Wm. Law, speaking of the directions the Saviour gave to his disciples, respecting giving alms, prayer, &c. says, “Why all this secrecy? It is (says he) that the whole work may be solely from, and to, and for God, and that self may have neither beginning nor end, or the least share in it.”

tury, "All gifts *or performances*, however great, illustrious, praiseworthy, and excellent they are in the judgment of the world, unless they proceed from a pure heart, unless they respect the sole honour of God, and the profit of our neighbour, and unless they be entirely free, and altogether separated from pride, arrogancy, and self-love, and from all desire of private praise and glory, they cannot in any wise please God." Let us all freely subscribe to the truth of this; and if, after an impartial examination into our own hearts, we find we are contaminated in our motives by one or the other of these principles, let us no longer assume the character of the saint, and thank God that we are not as other men; but let us candidly acknowledge our criminality, and use the language of the publican, —God be merciful to me a sinner.

The following extract from Barclay's apology, will further tend to shew the insufficiency of all our own performances, to find acceptance before the Lord, when done in our own wills, through fear, or under the influence of self-love. Speaking of the works and actions of men while in a natural and unrenewed state, and of their incapability either to change the heart or to please God, he observes: "Yea, should any (as many no doubt do) from a sense of sin, and fear of punishment, seek to terrify themselves from sin, by multiplying thoughts of death, and hell, and judgment, and by presenting to their imaginations the happiness and joys of heaven, and also by multiply-

ing prayers and other religious performances ; as these things could never deliver them from one iniquity without the secret and inward power of God's spirit and grace, so would they signify no more than the fig leaves, wherewith Adam thought to cover his nakedness. It is only the product of man's own natural will, proceeding from self-love, and seeking to save himself, and does not arise purely from that divine seed of righteousness, which is given of God to all for grace and salvation ; and it is rejected of God, and no ways acceptable unto him, since the natural man, as natural, while he stands in that state, is with all his arts, parts and actings, reprobated by him.\*

The pious David Brainard, who was several years a missionary to the Indians, speaking of himself while in an unrenewed and unenlightened state, says, " The more I did in duty, the more I thought God was obliged to me, the more easily I thought he could accept me, and the more hard I thought it would be for him to cast me off ; though at the same time, I confessed and thought I saw there was no goodness or merit in my duties." On coming to see himself and to view things in a proper light, he has these words, " But now the more

\* Says Boston, " All the unrenewed man's acts of obedience, his reformation, sober deportment, his prayers and good works, are but fruit to himself. They are all done chiefly for himself, not for the glory of God. The matter of duty is in them, but they want right principles and right ends. And as all a man does in an unrenewed state is for himself, so all he does is cursed."

I did in prayer or any other duty, the more. I saw I was indebted to God for allowing me to ask for mercy; for I saw it was self-interest had led me to pray, and that I had never once prayed from any respect to the glory of God.—Now I saw, there was no necessary connection between my prayers and the bestowment of divine mercy; that they laid not the smallest obligation upon God to bestow his grace upon me; and that there was no more virtue or goodness in them, than there would be in my paddling with my hand in the water, and this because they were not performed from any love or regard to God. I saw that I had been heaping up my devotions before God, fasting, praying, &c. pretending, and indeed really thinking, at sometimes, that I was aiming at the glory of God; whereas I never once intended it, but only my own happiness. I saw, that, as I had never done any thing for God, I had no claim to lay to any thing from him, but perdition on account of my hypocrisy and mockery.—When I saw evidently that I had regard to nothing but self-interest, in my duties, then they appeared vile mockery of God, self-worship and a continual course of lies.”

A few remarks shall close this part of the subject. It follows, from what has already been stated, that there can be no true faith, love, or obedience, until there is an implantation of an inward principle of life in the soul; for if, as the scriptures assure us, we are *dead* by nature, how can we, while dead, have living

faith, feel true love, or yield acceptable obedience? It is impossible. That which is dead, cannot put forth acts which are peculiar only to life. We must therefore be *quickened*, before we can exercise either the one or the other of these graces: something must *first* be engendered or begotten in us, from whence faith and every other true grace must flow. Hence faith is the gift of God, in as much as it proceeds from something given unto, and within us. All the faith, love and obedience, that proceeds from mere natural principles, from the old man, however strong, great, or abundant they may be, and whatever astonishing revolutions they may make in one's outward deportment, comes entirely short of acceptance before God. The man is really, inwardly and truly, no better after it all: for whatsoever proceeds from the creaturely part of man, is of no worth in God's sight: he accepts it not—The corrupt tree may bring forth much fruit, and quite fair fruit to look upon, but it *cannot* bring forth *good fruit*. So it is in this case. Men without any new principles formed within them, may do much, and do that which outwardly appears good and right, but they cannot do what God accepts. *They that are in the flesh cannot please God, saith the Apostle.*

A true principle, therefore, must be formed within us, before any thing truly good can be acted out. We may believe, love and obey, in our own natures, (or from what is within us,) but it is nothing worth, they are dead works in point of acceptance with God, being perform-

ed when dead to an inward principle of divine life. Thus the apostle, in his epistle to the Hebrew Christians, speaking of the time when they set out in their own natures, or from what was within them, before an implantation of true grace took place, calls all the things then done dead works. What most people at first do in order to find acceptance before God, are but dead works, since they are works performed without any inward principle of divine life, but wholly proceed from the old man, which is corrupt in all its parts, and in all its actings, according to the deceitful lusts. Many we are assured, shall say unto Christ in the last day, *have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and done many wonderful works?* To whom Christ will declare he never knew them. These people now, without any manner of doubt, had faith in Christ, (Simon Magus had faith in Christ) but it was not faith from an inward principle of divine life every person may know; for whosoever believeth from this principle, agreeably to Christ's own words, shall be saved; and as these are not saved, neither were ever acceptable unto Christ, it follows of course, that they did not believe from this inward principle of divine life, without which, it may be affirmed, none will be saved.

It is necessary that we should look well into these things, if we would not lose our souls—Indeed, as has before been stated, Christ must be formed in us, to believe, love and obey, or



else it will be a gone case with us in the day of eternity. For people may extol Christ, follow Christ, and believing their sins are forgiven, may be full of joy and comfort, &c. and after all be lost, being all done, acted and felt, in their own spirits, without any inward principle of divine life. It is manifest, therefore, that one may believe in Christ, show great respect to Christ, and be filled with joy, and comfort, and peace, and after all have nothing which God accepts. False notions of religion have almost destroyed true religion out of the earth; and it may be asserted as a truth, that all those who make religion, any thing short of a holy principle within, bringing forth actions from a pure fountain and with pure motives, are not only deceiving themselves, but deceiving others also.

## PART II.

*Shewing what are distinguishing signs of a truly renewed and gracious state.*

I would here observe in the words of president Edwards, in his treatise on religious affections, that "No such signs are to be expected, as shall be sufficient to enable those certainly to discern their good estate, who are very low in grace, or are fallen into a dead, and unchristian frame. It is not agreeable to God's design, (as has been already observed,) that such should know their good estate, nor is it desirable that they should; but, on the contrary, it is every way best that they should not; and we have reason to bless God, that he has made no provision in his word that such should certainly know the state that they are in, any other way than by first coming out of the ill frame and way they are in.

"Indeed it is not properly through the defect of the signs given in the word of God, that every saint living, whether strong or weak, and those who are in a low frame as well as others, cannot certainly know their good estate by them. For the rules contained in the scriptures, are in themselves certain and infallible, and every saint has, or has had those things in himself, which are sure evidences of grace. But it is through his defect to whom the signs are given. There is a threefold defect,

*“First.* A defect in the object, or the qualification to be viewed and examined. I do not mean an essential defect; but a defect in degree: grace being very small, cannot be clearly and certainly discerned and distinguished. Things that are very small, we cannot clearly discern their form, or distinguish them one from another; though, as they are in themselves, their form may be very different. There is doubtless a great difference between the body of man, and the bodies of other animals, in the first conception in the womb: but yet if we should view the different embryos, it might not be possible for us to discern the difference, by reason of the imperfect state of the object; but as it comes to greater perfection, the difference becomes very plain. The difference between creatures of very contrary qualities, is not so plainly to be seen while they are very young, even after they are actually brought forth, as in their more perfect state. The difference between doves and ravens, or doves and vultures, when they first come out of the egg, is not so evident; but as they grow to their perfection, it is very great and manifest.

*“Secondly.* Another defect attending the grace of those I am speaking of, is its being mingled with so much corruption, which clouds and hides it, and makes it impossible for it certainly to be known. Though different things, that are before us, may have in themselves many marks thoroughly distinguishing them one from another; yet, if we see them only in a

thick smoke, it may nevertheless be impossible to distinguish them. A fixed star is easily distinguishable from a comet in a clear sky ; but if we view them through a thick cloud, it may be impossible to see the difference. When true christians are in an ill frame, guilt lies on the conscience ; which will bring fear, and so prevent the peace and joy of an assured hope.

“ *Thirdly.* There is in such a case a defect in the eye. As the feebleness of grace and prevalence of corruption, obscures the object ; so it enfeebles the sight ; it darkens the sight as to all spiritual objects, of which grace is one. Sin is like some distempers of the eyes, that make things to appear of different colours from those which properly belong to them, and like many other distempers, that put the mouth out of taste, so that one is unable to distinguish good and wholesome food from bad, but every thing tastes bitter. Men in a corrupt frame, have their spiritual senses in but poor plight for judging and distinguishing spiritual things.

“ For these reasons, no signs that can be given, will actually satisfy persons in such a case ; let the signs that are given be never so good and infallable, and clearly laid down, they will not serve them. It is like giving a man rules, how to distinguish visible objects in the dark ; the things themselves may be very different, and their difference may be very well and distinctly described to him, yet all is insufficient to enable him to distinguish them, because he is in the dark. And therefore

many persons in such a case spend time in a fruitless labour, in pouring on past experiences, and examining themselves by signs, they hear laid down from the pulpit or that they read in books ; when there is other work for them to do, which while they neglect, all their self-examinations are like to be vain, if they should spend never so much time in them. The *accursed thing* is to be destroyed from their camp, and Achan to be slain ; and until this be done they will be in trouble. It is not God's design, that men should obtain assurance in any other way, than by mortifying corruption, and in increasing in grace. And although self-examination be a duty of great use and importance, and by no means to be neglected ; yet it is not the principal means by which the saints do get satisfaction of their good estate. Assurance is not to be obtained so much, by *self-examination*, as by *action*. The apostle Paul sought assurance chiefly this way, even, by 'forgetting the things that were behind, and reaching forth unto those things that were before, pressing towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.' Giving all diligence to grow in grace, by adding to faith, virtue, &c. is the direction that the apostle Peter gives us, for 'making our calling and election sure, and having an entrance ministered to us abundantly, into Christ's everlasting kingdom ;' signifying to us, that without this, our eyes will be dim, and we shall be as men in the dark, that cannot plainly see either the forgiveness of our

sins past, or our heavenly inheritance that is future and far off.

“Therefore, though good rules to distinguish true grace from counterfeit, may tend to convince hypocrites, and be of great use to the saints in many respects ; and among other benefits may be very useful to them to remove many needless scruples, and establish their hope, yet I am far from pretending to lay down such rules, as shall be sufficient of themselves, without other means, to enable all true saints to see their good estate, or as supposing they should be the principal means of their satisfaction.

“Nor is there much encouragement, in the experience of present or past times, to lay down rules or marks to distinguish between true and false affections, in hopes of convincing any considerable number of that sort of hypocrites, who have been deceived with great false discoveries and affections, and are once settled in a false confidence, and high conceit of their own supposed great experiences and privileges. Such hypocrites are so conceited of their own wisdom, and so blinded and hardened with a very great self-righteousness, and so invincible a fondness of their pleasing conceit of their great exaltation, that it usually signifies nothing at all, to lay before them the most convincing evidences of their hypocrisy. Their state is indeed deplorable, and next to those that have committed the unpardonable sin. Some of these sort of per-

sions seem to be most out of the reach of means of conviction and repentance. But yet the laying down good rules may be a means of convincing many other kinds of hypocrites; and God is able to convince even this kind, and his grace is not to be limited nor means to be neglected. And, besides, such rules may be of use to the true saints, to detect false affections, which they may have mingled with true; and be a means of their religion's becoming more pure, and like gold tried in the fire."

These things being premised, I proceed to shew what are distinguishing signs of a renewed or gracious state.

And here I must remark, that as every one making any pretences to religion, both professes, and perhaps feels, a certain love to God, openly avows a desire for holiness,\* and does many things; it will be perceived that the grand question in order to know our state, is not so much whether we have a love to God, as whether we have a true love to him;

\* "The reason (says Bellamy) that sinners many times *think* that they *love* holiness, and *desire heartily and sincerely* to be *made holy*, that they, being ignorant of the nature of true holiness, have framed a *false image* of it in their own fancies. Did they but distinctly know *the very thing itself*, their native contrariety to it could no longer be hid. So the Pharisees thought they loved God, and loved his law; although at the same time, they perfectly hated the Son of God, who was the express image of his Father, and came into the world to do honour to his Father's law. They had wrong notions of God, and of his law."

and we are more concerned to enquire what influences us to desire holiness and practise enjoined duties, than to enquire whether or not we desire holiness and perform enjoined duties. By this means only, shall we be able to come to a knowledge of what we are; for no one can act beyond his principle. The corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit. No natural man can love God purely on account of his own excellency—desire holiness for its own sake—and seek to overcome all sin, deny himself, and walk in the way of obedience, without having respect to a good name, esteem from men, or his own interest and advantage, either here or hereafter. This is something which the natural man, while natural, cannot attain unto. It is entirely beyond any thing that is within him. Hence before any one can do these things, there must be a new nature formed within.

There is such a thing as a base, counterfeit, selfish love to God, which the most carnal men may have, without any change of nature whatever. *Sinners love those that love them.* No love is a true love, but that which proceeds out of a pure heart, (for the stream is always of the same nature as the fountain from whence it proceeds,) consequently a right principle must be in us, before we can have a right love. If we love God on account of some supposed regard he has to us, or something received or expected to be received, instead of loving him on account of the holi-



ness and purity of his nature, this is no fixed, permanent love; and it will last no longer than we suppose the Lord has a liking to us, and intends to do for us some great benefit. And let the most carnal heart take up an idea, that the Lord has a particular love to him, that there is no one he sets more by, and his affections will be worked up to great a degree of love to him; he will extol his goodness, will be clamorous in his praise, and call on others to praise him, and be very zealous for him. But as all this love arises only from self-love, and comes from an impure heart, it is nothing worth; and let such a man become convinced that the Lord is displeased with him, that he discovers the hypocrisy of his heart, and intends to punish him for his deeds, and behold all his love is gone! he no longer speaks of his goodness; there is nothing now amiable in his character; he does not like such a God as will behold sin in him and punish it; his love is turned into a kind of hatred, and there is just about as much virtue in it, as there was in his love before; for when the tree or heart is corrupt, the love and hatred which come from it, are one and the same, in point of acceptance before God. And further, as there is the same disposition in every one towards men, that there is towards God; as long as you come into such a person's way, hold with him, and gratify his self-love, you are an excellent one indeed, nothing is too good for you, he praises you to every

body. But tell him that you much question whether he has any religion, and begin to point out his faults, and all is over—he will praise you no more. Reader art thou such an one?

That persons may, under a delusive notion of God's love to them, feel a sort of love to him, serve him fervently, and be very zealous to bring others to serve him, and be nothing but carnal, unholy persons, is very clear from the case of the Pharisees and Catholicks—for while the carnal and unsanctified Jews were under an idea, that the Lord had a particular love to them, that they were his peculiar people, would never cast them off, and would pay no respect to any other people save themselves, they could feel a great attachment to him; they could praise his name, and give ever so much to support the worship and sacrifices of the temple—Now who does not see, that all this affection arose from self-love, through delusion. Could they only have seen in what light the Lord viewed them, and how his hand was turned against them, their hearts would have at once rose up in opposition to him, and nothing but his omnipotence would be able to secure him from that vengeance they inflicted upon his only begotten Son.—Their love to their neighbour was of the same kind; for while Paul was going on persecuting the saints, trying to uphold their cause, and zealous for their way, he was in great esteem with them; they could extol him as an

excellent man, and do any thing almost for him. But as soon as he turned from their service, the utmost hatred and spite were witnessed against him.\* So again the most bitter and persecuting C  tholicks, under a notion that they were the Lord's people—that he was engaged in the support of their cause, and assisted them in overcoming the hereticks, (so called,) felt a great love towards him, and were abundant in their gratitude and praises to him at any advantage they obtained over those they hated, supposing the Lord particularly interfered in their behalf. Their love now was base—was counterfeit, and was just as great an abomination in the sight of God, as the heart from whence it flowed. In short it was an imaginary God they loved, praised, and felt gratitude towards, and not the true God ; for the God of heaven who enjoined compassion, and who requires purity, took no part with them in these proceedings ; for he could not assist them in destroying his true worshippers.

This is a point of very great importance for us to consider. Delusion, I believe, is as prevalent at this time, as it has been in any period of the world ; and the love of many,

\* "A love (says Bellamy) which arises to any one on account of his pleading, standing up, contending for them, and maintaining their cause, is a love pregnant with hatred and ill will to every body else : and nothing will humour and gratify it more, than to see the opposite party hated, reviled and blackened."

I fear, arises only from a principle of self-love, and is of no account whatever—I have before said, and again repeat, that no love can be a right love, but that which proceeds out of a pure heart, or from a right principle within; for love is always of the same nature as the heart from whence it proceeds; and instead of being a virtue, it is often a sin. For instance, a man wants a cause to go in his favour, his interest very much depends upon it, but this cannot be brought about, unless the judge will be partial in his decision, and do the greatest injustice to others. This by a small sum of money he is brought to do, and now the man whose interest he has so much favoured, has a great love to him, he speaks very much in his praise, and is ready to do him any service in return. A truly virtuous man now would feel abhorrence to such unjust conduct: and to feel love to one in such a case, instead of being a virtue, or praiseworthy, it is a sin.

An ancient writer, speaking of charity or love as it is in man, says, "*It is twofold.* The one is a love that is true, hearty, living, sincere, and disinterested; the other is a love that is false, outward, dead, hypocritical, cloaked, and selfish. This last, how much soever in outward shew it may seem to affect the divine and human good, and to consider the profit and benefit of mankind; yet inwardly, and in the heart, respecteth but private profit and honour. And whatsoever

floweth from this fountain, cometh not from God, and is rejected. For as a flower that is, in sight, in taste, and in smell, most beautiful and sweet, most fragrant and delightful, if it contain in it any venom, is not approved either by the beauty of the colour, nor the pleasantness of the smell, nor by the sweetness of the taste: so in like manner, man, if he be adorned with the gifts of angels, and be full of self-love and arrogancy, then all his gifts and performances are of no account. For all that which is good indeed, always ought to have God in the beginning, and God in the ending; who as he is the author of every good thing, so whatsoever he worketh in us, is truly good, and that only. But it is quite otherwise if the desire of honour, or private profit, shall have any design in it; or if there be the least of pride, or self-love, in that which we do. For when it cometh not from God, and is not carried on by the impulse and leading of his Holy Spirit, it can never be good." The same writer elsewhere observes, "All the works of christians ought to proceed purely from the new creature. And if it be not so, whatsoever things they do, how great soever, yet before God they are void, and are all to no purpose in the world. Also towards our neighbour, all things ought to be done in charity, without hope or prospect of private gain or honour.\* Let us

\* Says one—"However full of love persons may seem to be to their neighbours, if all arises merely from self-love,

therefore beseech Almighty God from the bottom of our hearts, to give us sincere love, defiled with no desire of honour, profit, or glory, and poisoned with no *impure* streams of selfishness ; which when once obtained, the very least thing, even a cup of cold water, will be then most dear and acceptable to God."

As all pure and undefiled religion, has its foundation in love to God, I now proceed to the first characteristic of a renewed and gracious state.

- I. *A true sincere love to God, on account of the holiness, purity and amiableness of his nature, independent of any favours received, or expected to be received, is a sure indication of a change of nature.*

Such a love to God, as the above, is the only love that can evidence that there is any real change in our nature : since all other love, as hath been shewn, may proceed out of a corrupt heart, or be only the effect of delusion. But in this case, there is nothing left to please or gratify the unrenewed nature of man, or excite a selfish love : and no ideas or apprehensions we can have respecting the ho-

or is for self-ends, nothing is genuine. A poor man will honour those who are rich, if he hopes to get any thing by it. A rich man may be kind to the poor, with an eye to his credit. An awakened sinner will love an awakening preacher, in hopes he shall be converted by his ministry. A minister may seem to show a world of love to the souls of sinners, and all with an eye to applause," &c. &c.

liness, purity and amiableness of the divine character, can possibly be delusory.

That we ought to love God, antecedent to any particular manifestation of his love to us, as individuals, no one will deny, who considers the great command of the law, viz. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength."\* To say we are not to love God before we have some manifestation of his love to us in particular, is to deny the obligation imposed by this law, and to declare, in effect, we are not to love a man that is ever so just, good and upright, before he comes and makes a manifestation of his love to us in particular, or bestows upon us some very considerable benefits—Whereas every one knows, that we ought to esteem and love an upright, just and good man, on account of these qualities, if he were never to manifest his love to us in particular, or do us any especial benefit; for not to love such a person, is a full proof that we have no love to what is good in itself, unless our own interest is promoted by it, or self-love is in some way or other gratified. Says Bel-

\* "The law (says Bellamy) requires us to love God *more* than ourselves; but in the nature of things, it is impossible that merely from self-love, we should love God more than ourselves: Therefore the law supposes that there is something in God to excite our love, antecedent to any selfish consideration, and that our love to him is not to proceed merely from self-love: For, otherwise, the law requires us to do that which in its own nature is absolutely impossible."

lamy, "The infinite excellency of the divine nature binds us, and makes it our duty, antecedent to any consideration of advantage, rewards or punishments, or even of the positive will and law of God, to love God with all our hearts ; and therefore our love must primarily take its rise from a sense of this infinite excellency of the divine nature ; and that seeming love, which arises merely from selfish considerations, from the fear of punishment or hope of reward, or because the law requires it, and so it is a duty and must be done, is not genuine ; but is a selfish, a mercenary, and a forced thing." Says a late writer—"There is not a more fatal error in the church, and to the souls of men, than the supposition, that the sinner begins to love God in consequence of discovering that God is going to save him. The thing itself speaks and shows selfishness without any disguise. I am amazed that the bare suggestion should not excite alarm and suspicion, distrust and aversion. What says our Saviour ? "If ye love them that love you, what thank have ye ?" Do not even sinners love those that love them ? Such a kind of love is no sign of grace. Nothing can be more certain than that all the wicked on earth, and that all the devils in hell, could they discover that God was going to make them eternally happy, would love him for it, would feel very grateful, and think him a very good being. Let those who trust in such a kind of love to God, be assured, that their foundation is sand. That



we ought to love God before we have any evidence that he is going to save us, few will dare to deny: and this, I think, to the discerning mind, shows what the proper motive of love to God is. It is certain that the devils now in hell, are under the same obligation to love and adore him as the angels of light in heaven. Saints and angels do, in fact, love God for the same reason for which wicked men and devils are bound to love him, viz. because he is infinitely excellent and worthy to be loved."

The apostle says, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed."—He does not say, if those do not love him, who have received pardon of sin, and have been made partakers of very important benefits, but he says, *if any man*, including all.\* The truth of the case is, none but an impure and an unholy being, can possibly avoid loving the Lord with all the heart, mind and strength, on a discovery of what he is, in and of himself; and on the other hand, just in the same proportion as God is made known in his true character, to an impure and unholy being, in the same proportion will

\* It is by no means to be understood, that the favours and benefits received from the Lord, do not increase the love and gratitude of the truly regenerated towards him. In no persons perhaps does favours and benefits received, so much increase these brightest of graces: But let it be kept in mind, that a true love to God, founded on his glorious attributes of justice, holiness and truth, independent of any favours received, or expected to be received, is alone the love that furnishes any conclusive evidence, that we are *born again*. Every other love but this, carnal people may have, and it will die or decay on a withdrawalment, or on a withholding of the things which first produced it.

his heart rise up in opposition to him, and in the same proportion will the enmity of his nature manifest itself. For, "When natures are in perfect contrariety, (the one sinful, the other holy,) the more they are known to each other, the more is mutual hatred stirred up, and their entire aversion to each other becomes more sensible. The more they know of one another, the greater is their dislike, and the plainer do they feel it. The fallen angels doubtless have a very clear sight and great sense of what God is, but the more they know of God, the more they hate him : And it is just so with every unholy being.

"But here (continues Bellamy) a secure sinner will say, Surely there is no contrariety in my heart to God ; I never hated God in my life ; I always loved him. To this it is answered. The Scribes and Pharisees verily thought that they loved God, and that if they had lived in the days of their fathers, they would not have put the *Prophets* to death. They were altogether insensible of the perfect contrariety of their hearts to the divine nature. —And whence was it ? Why, they had wrong notions of the divine being, and they loved that false image which they had framed in their own fancies ;\* and so they had wrong notions of the prophets which their fathers hated and murdered, and hence imagined that they should have

\* If our apprehensions of God are not right, it is not God we love, but only a false image of him framed in our own fancy." *Bellamy.*

loved them. But they saw a little what a temper and disposition Christ was of, and him they hated with a perfect hatred. So there are multitudes of secure sinners and self-deceived hypocrites, who verily think they love God ; nevertheless, as soon as ever they open their eyes in eternity, and see just what God is, their love will vanish, and their enmity break out and exert itself to perfection. So, that the reason sinners see not their contrariety to the divine nature, is their not seeing what God is. It must be so ; for a sinful nature and an holy nature are diametrically opposite. So much as there is of a sinful disposition in the heart, so much of contrariety is there to the divine nature. If, therefore, we are not sensible of this contrariety, it can be owing to nothing but our ignorance of God, or not believing him to be what he really is.

The scriptures declare, that the carnal mind is *enmity towards God* ; that it is not subject to the law of God, neither can be, while it remains carnal. The reason is evident, there can be no union between two things that are directly opposite the one to the other. Such is the purity of God and the law of God, to the carnal and-unrenewed nature of depraved man. The divine character is odious to such a person ; and that holiness and purity which the law of God requires, his heart rises up against. He does not like that justice in God which will not bend to suit his interest. If, indeed, God would give up his justice, and have no respect to equity, but manage things just to

favour him, then he might love him. He possesses the same disposition towards man. He will feel love where he ought to feel dislike, and feel dislike where he ought to feel love ; for when any one will wrong another to favour his interest, or set aside justice to promote his cause, he has a great love and esteem for him. But if by some art or intrigue, he wishes to get the advantage of another, and stands in need of your assistance to get it brought about, and you refuse to assist him therein, or take part in the injustice, he will not like you at all, and from that time, he may be considered your enemy. Some of these very characters get into a way of religion with all their vileness about them, and think themselves great saints. Yea, from an idea that the Lord loves them, is engaged in promoting their welfare, and intends to take them to heaven when they die, they may feel a very great love towards him. But these are they of whom Mr. Law says, their love is worth no more than their hatred.

“ The goodness of God (says Bellamy) is a holy, wise, and rational goodness, and not an unreasonable fondness ; he will never do a wrong thing, to oblige any of his creatures.” Again, speaking of the impartial justice of God, as one of the things for which we ought to love him, he says—“ He appears as one governed by a spirit of the most perfectly disinterested impartiality, in that he spared not the angels that sinned, who were some of the noblest of all his creatures ; and in this is shewn that impenitent sinners will not be spared at the day of judg-

ment, though they cry ever so earnestly for mercy." He continues—"If ever any poor, guilty wretch, round the world, feels tempted to think that God is cruel for damning sinners, and does not do as he would be done by, if he was in their case, and they in his, let him come away to the cross of Christ, and see God's own Son, his second self, there nailed up, naked, bleeding, groaning, dying, in the greatest possible contempt, ignominy, and shame, before ten thousand insulting, blood thirsty spectators, and let him know that this Jesus is God; a person of infinitely greater dignity and worth than all creatures in heaven and earth put together, and infinitely dearer to the great Governor of the world, even just as dear as his own self, and upon whom he would not lay those sufferings any sooner than upon himself; I say, let him stand, and look and gaze, and learn that God does exactly as he would be done by, when he damns sinners to all eternity, were he in their case, and they in his, (if I may so say, when speaking of the most high God,) since that for his own Son, a person of infinite dignity, to suffer all these things, is equivalent to the eternal torments of finite creatures.

"But here, (he remarks,) one may say—Surely it must be absolutely impossible we should love God, if we view him, as disposed to punish us in hell forever; yea if I look on God as contrary to me, as one that is against me, and will damn me, my own innate self-love will breed hatred and heart-risings against him in spite of my heart."

In reply, Bellamy observes, "This is in effect to declare the divine law [which threatens such punishment] is so intolerably cruel, that unless it is set aside as to us, we can never be pacified towards our Maker.\* We are in arms, in open rebellion; and we proclaim in the sight of heaven, our cause is so just, that we can never lay down our arms, fall at the feet of our sovereign and justify his law; nay, we can never have one good thought of him, till first he set aside his law, remove the curse, and grant us heaven upon our own demands. Upon this condition we will forgive our Law-giver for what is past, and be at peace for the future, on this footing we will lay down our arms, and be reconciled.—But I ask, Is God's disposition to punish sin according to his holy law, a hateful disposition? Is God an odious being on this account?—If to believe that God is pacified towards us, and loves us, and is determined to take us to heaven, is to lay the foundation of all our religion, it must be a poor religion—the devils might have this

\* It is said by some—"If our enmity against God arises from conceiving him to be our enemy, remove the cause, and the effect will cease. If we view him as our reconciled Father and friend, the occasion of our enmity being removed, our enmity will cease, and we shall naturally love him." Bellamy replies, "True if conceiving God to be our enemy is the only cause of our enmity against him, this will effectually remove it. Nor shall we need to be *born again* or to have any new principle of *divine life* communicated to us. But from the principles of nature we may love God thus, and the regenerating, sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit will be wholly useless.—Only let God declare that God loves us, and all is done."

religion if they could be brought to have the same belief. Such a faith, growing up out of such an unhumiliated, unsubdued heart as this, and a religion arising from such a root, is all delusion, if there be any such thing in nature as delusion. And how righteous is it, in the holy sovereign of the world, to suffer such a proud, self-righteous sinner, so ready to quarrel for pardon, to be deluded with a false persuasion that he is pardoned. As he takes Satan's side against God and his law, so God may justly leave him in Satan's power to be deceived."

If, as one has said, "It is impossible for a human heart to be charmed with a character just opposite to its own," it follows of course, that before a man can truly love the God of truth, justice, holiness and purity, a new and divine principle must be formed within him.\* He may figure to his mind, a God suitable to his taste, that winks at all his sins, has a liking to him, and exercises a particular providence in his favour, and feel a great love to him, and be very lavish in praising him; but all this is nothing but love out of an impure heart, through delusion. The carnal mind yet in him is enmity towards the true God, who is just and righteous, and will in no wise clear the

\* "The divine character (says Bellamy) must be altered, or we be born again, or God can never appear unto us an amiable being. We may figure to our minds a God suitable to our taste, while in a carnal state, and feel love towards it, but it will be only a carnal love, such as any one can feel."

guilty or approbate sin ; and a discovery of his true nature and character would soon turn his love into hatred. " We may have love (says Bellamy) and self-love be the source of all our affections. The hypocritical Galatians loved Paul, while they considered him as the instrument of their conversion, and means of their salvation ; but on a further acquaintance with the man, they turned his enemies, for his character rightly understood, did not suit them." So it may be with many carnal people towards the Lord : being ignorant of his true character, and conceiving the Lord has a particular liking to them, and intends to do for them some great benefit, and sees no sin in them, they may love him : but no sooner than they see his true character, and his irreconcilable opposition to all sin, their love is killed, and every thing amiable in his character disappears.

As I have before said, it is nothing but wickedness or degeneracy in us, that prevents us from loving the Lord with all the heart, mind and strength ; for God is worthy of the love of all intelligent beings, and they all ought to love him, by reason of what he is in and of himself. To say they ought not thus to love him, is to say in effect, God is not a righteous and amiable being ; or else, that we are not to love what is righteous and amiable, neither of which can be admitted : Hence the moral law, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, &c. is binding upon all intelligences, both in hea-



ven and on earth.\* The fallen angels are as much under obligation (and it is as much their duty) to love, praise and adore the Lord now, as ever they were. The Lord has never done any thing but what was right, and every being is bound to love what is right, and cannot be right till he does love what is right. The criminality is entirely on their part. God has done to them what is strictly right, and what all holy beings approve of: and for them to disapprove of it, and feel no love to him, is their sin.

Further, if we were in a right state we should say Amen, to all the Lord's dispensations towards us; for not to say it, is in effect to say we do not believe the Lord does what is right; or else that we are unwilling he should do right. And so it is, that whenever one begins to come into a right state, he begins to take all blame entirely off from God, and lay it wholly upon himself. He sees the Lord has done altogether right, that he is himself unworthy of existence on account of his impiety; and when, without reserve, he gives himself up entirely to the will of God, and submits himself to any punishment he shall see fit to appoint unto him, that moment he is

\* Says Bellamy—"The obligation which we are under to love God with all our hearts, resulting from the infinite excellency of the divine character, antecedent to any selfish considerations, is infinitely, eternally, and unchangeably binding: he must cease to be amiable, before our obligation, thence arising, can possibly cease to be binding."

a right state, he is one with God, and all punishment is suspended upon him.

That it is right and reasonable we should thus offer up ourselves into the hands and to the will of God, nothing is more evident; for it is not possible for the Lord to do any thing but what is right, and nothing but wrong in us, makes us unwilling that right should be done. You may say it is a hard thing, for one thus to submit himself to the will of God in all cases. To this I answer, Nothing but self-love renders it hard; and what is right we should do, however contrary to self-love it may be. If a child has offended against an indulgent parent, does it not look becoming, nay will it not go better with the child, if the parent sees him so sensible of the wrong he has done, and so conscious that the parent will do right, as to give up himself without reserve to whatever the parent shall see fit to inflict upon him, saying, Father, I have done exceedingly wrong, I have greatly offended, here I am, willing to receive any punishment you shall think proper to lay upon me. A parent seeing his child in this state, could hardly punish him—he would see there was no occasion of any punishment for such a child—his heart would melt with love and pity towards him, and he would receive him as though he had never offended.

Again: is it not becoming in a criminal, and does it not interest every judge in his favour, to see him have such a sense of his guilt, and

such a reliance on the justice of his judges, as to be willing to submit implicitly to their determination concerning him; blaming only himself, and acknowledging, if they condemn him to experience the severest punishment, it will be but just. Seeing him in this state, will not every judge be interested in his favour? and will they not be very apt to acquit him, or at least use all their influence to obtain for him a pardon. On the other hand, if he makes every effort to avoid a just decision upon him—tries to bribe the judges, or is averse to submit to what they shall decree, will not every one perceive that such a person is not worthy of having mercy shewn unto him; and notwithstanding all his endeavours to evade justice, and escape punishment, will he not have to suffer all the severity of the law, unpitied and unlamented by every body.

There have been cases where persons have been unwilling to have pardon granted them; they felt it so right that punishment should be inflicted upon them, that they have chose that the sentence of the law should be pronounced upon them, and they have suffered amidst the tears and sighs of a large assembled people, offering up blessings on them, and almost wishing to die in their stead—I remember to have heard the case of a young woman, who becoming pregnant, on the delivery of her child, destroyed the tender infant to secure herself from the disgrace and odium that would be occasioned by a discovery of her illicit con-

nexion: The fact came to light, and she was apprehended. Soon after she was apprehended, she became so penitent and so weighed down under a sense of what she had done, that she seemed to think no atonement would be equivalent to the deed, but giving up her own life, which she wished might be the case. The judges seeing her penitence, were moved towards her, and were minded to have her pardoned, but she earnestly desired they would not acquit her, telling them it was her choice to suffer the penalty which was so justly due, and that she should never feel right to escape; and therefore hoped they would pronounce the sentence of the law upon her. She had some doubts about her condition in the other world, it seems, and requested that if the Lord was reconciled to her, he would at the gallows give her some token, to signify that it would be well with her in the other world: and just as she was about to be turned off, the clouds, which had been thick all the day, opened all at once, and the sun shone full in her face, and immediately closed up again. This is the account as nearly as I can recollect, and it was related to me as a fact.

It is certainly right that we should fall out with ourselves, and justify the ways of God to man—he doth all things right—he has no pleasure in the punishment of his creatures; and though man may punish, when one gives up freely to be punished, the Lord I do not believe ever will; if he does, it will be solely

for our good. I have often thought upon the penitent and striking words of Monsieur Barreaux, who, it seems, was so dissatisfied with his ways and with himself, and felt such delight in the righteousness of the divine character, that we hear him utter these memorable words to the author of his existence: "Strike me—beat me—return me war for war. I adore in perishing, the reason for which I am destroyed." He could not bear to live, it seems, to offend against the Lord, and he was well pleased with, and delighted in that justice, which would punish and destroy such a rebellious one as him. But was this man destroyed? Oh no, he was dear unto his God. Like the prodigal son, the heavenly Father seeing his sorrow for what he had done, could embrace him in his arms, and declare unto him, all that I have is thine, thou shalt share in my tenderest affection, and no longer feel hunger in a foreign land; and the holy angels would join in acclamations of joy on the return of a wandering child, humbled as in the dust, and pouring out complaints against himself.

As I have before said, to offer one's self up into the hands of the Lord, for the Lord to do unto him as he sees fit, without any reserve, is often the very eve of one's entire renewal in the things which are right. It is an acknowledgment that the ways of the Lord are righteous, just and good, and that if we are lost, it is not his fault, but ours,—that we justly deserve all that he can inflict upon us, and that let him do

to us as he may, we will feel nothing but good will and love to him, and delight in those very attributes that banish us forever from his presence. Self-love comes down, and thus we hear the person say: "Let all heaven forever adore the infinitely glorious majesty, although I receive my just desert, and perish forever"—God is good though I suffer—my sins have caused it, I resign myself to any thing the Lord shall see fit to appoint unto me—he cannot do otherwise than right, and I cannot desire him to do wrong, and injure his own character to save me: this would be adding to all my other sins.

That a criminal ought to resign himself up, and submit to any punishment a righteous and equitable judge awards to him, without a complaining thought against any one, and even to love and regard the judge that has acted with the utmost integrity, and done as much to save him as justice would permit his doing, no one pretends to deny; and not to be thus, creates dislike to the criminal, and he is pronounced an unhumiliated impenitent criminal—he suffers unpitied: and to say we ought not to be thus towards the Lord, who, as judge of all the earth will do right, is absurd in the extreme; though I well know how the carnal heart and self-love in man will rise up against these things, even in great professors. Oh how few have this excellent, this right disposition towards God in this day. And as men have the same disposition towards men that they have towards God, as has before been observed, it is easy to know

that disposition people are of towards God, upon an acquaintance with them. Is a man earnest to have you give up your own interest or will, to favour his cause? does he importune you to come into his way, and do what is contrary to right, to please him? Then is he an abomination unto the Lord. He wishes the Lord to pay no regard to equity in his dealings towards him; he desires the Lord to submit his will entirely to his will, and would greatly complain, and quite fall out with Jehovah himself, if he were not to prostrate all his holy attributes to bring him to heaven, were it necessary. The truly renewed soul, whose love to the Lord is founded on the truth, purity, holiness, and righteousness of his nature, freely and implicitly surrenders himself up into his hands, to dispose of him, and to do to him, agreeably to his own will and pleasure, at all times; saying amen, to all his dispensations; desiring only to glorify him and please him in all things. In doing this there is a full manifestation, to angels and men, that he believes the Lord is righteous, and that he will extend his mercy, so far as justice will permit; and to desire him to do otherwise, is to desire him to do wrong; and to desire him to do wrong must be sin.

On the contrary, to be unwilling to submit ourselves up implicitly to the disposal of the Lord, to do to us in all cases according to his will, manifests a distrust of his righteousness, equity, or justice, which is impiety; or else it shews, we are under the influence of such a

selfish spirit, as to wish the Lord to do wrong; and we are no better in our hearts, than the man who will bribe a judge to favour his cause, or get a man to cheat another for the sake of his interest. And the love and disposition which most people have towards God in the present day, I fear, is of this very sort; consequently it is of no worth, and will only land them in ruin.

Says president Edwards,—“That kind of affection to God, which properly arises from self-love, cannot be a truly gracious and spiritual love. Christ speaks of this love, as what is nothing beyond the love of wicked men. ‘If ye love them that love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them.’ And the devil himself knew, that that kind of respect to God which was so mercenary, as to be only for the benefits received or depended on, (which is all one) is worthless in the sight of God; otherwise he never would have made use of such a slander before God against Job, ‘Doth Job serve God for nought? hast thou not made an hedge about him, and about his house,’ &c.?—Nor would God ever have implicitly allowed the objection to have been good, in case the accusation had been true, by allowing that that matter should be tried, and that Job should be so dealt with, that it might appear in the event, whether Job’s respect to God was thus mercenary or no; and by putting the proof of the sincerity and goodness of his respect to God upon this issue.”



Against what is advanced, some may object that passage in John, iv.—19. “We love him because he first loved us.” In view of this passage, Mr. Willison remarks, “If I make God’s love to *me* the foundation of my love to him, I make myself more than God; I make all his worthiness of my love to consist in his regard for me, and attention to my happiness. This interpretation of the passage, which is so calculated to foster the native pride and selfishness of the human heart, ought not for a moment to be indulged.” *We love him because he first loved us*: “that is, (says one) had he not been first in his love, and *opened a way for our reconciliation*, by sending his Son to be the propitiation for our sins, and by his spirit regenerated us unto holy disinterested love, to which the unrenewed heart is an utter stranger; had he not thus first loved us, and done all these things for us, we should never have known what true disinterested love is.”

What we are to understand, therefore, from this passage, is that God’s love is *first* in the affair. Had he not first loved us, and given his Son to die for us, and then implanted in us a new and holy principle, unholy characters as we were, we never could have had any true love to him; for, as before has been observed, it is impossible for the human heart to love a character just opposite to its own. Hence it was because he first loved us, and implanted a holy principle in us, that we love him,

An ancient writer speaking of the renova-

tion of our natures, thus sets forth this important truth. "Now seeing that the means was greater than the strength of man, and surpassed his nature, which of itself, and by its own tendency, can do nothing but love itself, favour itself, and cannot forbear to seek its own ends; or to speak all in a word, to *sin*; therefore God, in commiseration of our fallen state, ordered the beginning, the middle, and the end of the renovation, and the Son of God took the form of a *man* upon him, thereby to *renew* our nature; that being regenerated *by* him, *in* him, and *from* him, the corrupt man might become a *new creature*."

The love which a regenerated person has to God, is a pure love, such as no carnal heart can have; it is a love to him for what he is in and of himself, or the infinite amiableness of his nature, including the attributes of his justice and righteousness, and his entire opposition to all sin and unholiness of every kind: in these very attributes he delights, yea, and would delight in them, were they even exercised against himself. This pure and holy love, now, we could never have had, seeing we are corrupt, and a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit, (or have a right love,) had not God first loved us, and given a holy principle within us, from whence it could proceed. And after we are brought by grace, or God's love to us, into a right state to love him, we do then indeed feel more abundant love to him,

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not because we are likely, through his love, to escape eternal misery, and be selfishly happy in heaven; but because he has brought us to be right, to have a true love to him, and in some measure to glorify, honour and serve him. Here now is no self-love. What we desire is for God to be glorified by us, and in our having a right heart towards him; and we have a holy love towards him, purely for bringing us to glorify him, and nothing else, if we are truly right—his glory and interest being the only thing dear to us, and which alone we seek.

Every one ought to know, that the love a true christian has to God is no selfish sort of love. It does not arise merely because he is safe, and is likely to get to heaven, to be selfishly happy, having no love to the attributes of God, or any concern for his glory. But his love arises to God (separately considered from that which arises to him from the amiableness of his character, which as has before been observed, is the chief ground of love in all that are regenerated) for giving him a heart to love him, and renewing in him a new nature, that he may be glorified through and by him—his own interest being out of the question.—To return from this digression, “It is unreasonable (says Mr. Edwards) to think otherwise, than that the first foundation of a true love to God, is that whereby he is in himself lovely, or worthy to be loved, or the supreme loveliness

of his nature. This is certainly what makes him chiefly amiable. What chiefly makes a man, or any creature lovely, is his excellency; and so what chiefly renders God lovely, and must undoubtedly be the chief ground of true love, is his excellency. God's nature, or the divinity, is infinitely excellent; yea, it is infinite beauty, brightness, and glory itself. But how can that be true love of this excellent and lovely nature, which is not built on the foundation of its true loveliness? how can that be true love of beauty and brightness, which is not for beauty and brightness sake? how can that be true prizing of that which is in itself infinitely worthy and precious, which is not for the sake of its worthiness and preciousness? this infinite excellency of the divine nature, as it is in itself, is the true ground of all that is good in God in any respect; but how can a man truly and rightly love God, without loving him for that excellency in him, which is the foundation of all that is in any manner of respect good or desirable in him? they whose affection to God is founded first on his profitableness to them, their affection begins at the wrong end; they regard God only for the utmost limit of the stream of divine good, where it touches them, and reaches their interest; and have no respect to that infinite glory of God's nature, which is the original good, and the true fountain of all good, the first fountain of

all holiness of every kind, and so the first foundation of all true love.”\*

“If the foundation of our love to God (says Bellamy) is not on account of what he is, in and of himself, but only on account of his kindness to us, all my seeming love to him is nothing but self-love ; and let him cease being kind to me and my love will cease.” *The following is the same kind of love.* “As, if a rich man is kind and bountiful to poor people all around him, and appears to love and pity them, they, although almost ever so wicked, will feel a sort of love to him: But if this rich man happens to be a civil magistrate, and is called to sit as judge in their case, and passes judgment against them for their crimes, now their love dies, and enmity and hatred, and revenge begin to ferment in their hearts. In this case, it is not the *man* they love, but rather his *kindnesses* ; and their seeming love, is nothing but a certain operation of self-love.” That many who think they love God in the present day, only love his benefits, nothing is

\* “It is absolutely mercenary and selfish, unjust and ungenerous, pitiful and mean, to love God and goodness for the sake of recompence. It is like the Sorcerer’s asking the Apostle to sell him the gift of the Holy Ghost for money, that he might bestow the same gift on others, and gain more money by it. And as the Apostle indignantly tells the mercenary wretch, that his money would perish with him, so might it be told the selfish votaries of religion, that their love is counterfeit, and will perish with them.”

more certain; and they are no more than carnal, wicked men, after all their love. Should any thing be done which crosses their self-love; all their pretended love would be killed at once, or be turned into hatred. These are they again, concerning whom Wm. Law has said, their *love* is worth no more than their *hatred*.

Mr. Bellamy, speaking of the joys of the carnal Israelites on their deliverance at the Red Sea, and their murmurings in the wilderness, when their self-love was crossed, says, "Their joys and their murmurings proceeded from the very same principle, under different circumstances."\* And it may be added, perhaps, that there was as little real virtue in one as in the other. They that are in the flesh, or under the influence of a selfish spirit, cannot please God, let them do what they will. Cain offered his sacrifice as well as Abel, but the Lord did not accept him; not because he is a respecter of persons, but because Cain had a different heart, and of course was led to it by very different motives from Abel; for as is

\* "They loved *themselves*, (says Bellamy,) and therefore rejoiced at their wonderful deliverance; they loved *themselves*, and therefore they murmured three days after, when they came to the bitter waters." Self love, when crossed, is always turned into hatred, disaffection, or murmuring; and these characters of whom Mr. Bellamy speaks in this place, were no doubt as destitute of any true love to God, as those high professors in our Saviour's time, to whom he said, "I know you, that you have not the love of God in you." Where self-love is, there the love of God is not.

the heart, so are the motives which proceed from it—the one corresponds with the other. “Hypocrites (says one) can never attain to pure ends in their actings and performances; they never aim singly at God’s glory, Christ’s honor, and the good of souls. Their chief end is to get a reward either from God or man, or to avoid trouble either in their bodies or consciences, here or hereafter.”\*

“To come to God, (says Bellamy,) and pretend to worship him, not because he is God, but for mean, and mercenary, and selfish ends, is a very complicated wickedness; and to think to please God in this way, and get into heaven by this means, discovers such igno-

\* A writer of the last century, speaking of such as never become thoroughly changed, observes—“When they come to be awakened to a concern for their souls, they reform their lives, and take very different courses from what they used to do; yet still all is from the same principle, and for the same end. They have new lives, but the same nature. They do not really care for God or his glory, any more than they used to do; but are only after pardon of sin, and peace of conscience, which, according to their present sensations and apprehensions, they think would make them happy. And when they come to get false comfort, think they are pardoned, that Christ loves them, and that they shall go to heaven, they are filled with joy; and as all their joy results from self-love only, so all they rejoice in is what they think they have received, and what they hope yet to receive—while some after false comfort, turn enthusiasts, and get to *blazing*, and seem to be full of nothing but love to God; they have visions, dreams, revelations and impulses, are firmly persuaded they are the peculiar favourites of heaven, and the applause of their party is what they live upon, and take comfort in, and what animates them.”

rance and contempt of God, and a frame of heart so full of secret blasphemy, spiritual idolatry, pride and hypocrisy, as cannot be easily expressed." *The same writer elsewhere observes* ; " We may be certain that all that seeming love to God is counterfeit, that arises merely from a legal self-righteous spirit : As when a man, only because he is afraid of hell, and has a mind to be saved, sets himself to repent, and reform, and do duties, and tries to love God and aim at his glory, to the intent that he may make some amends for past sins, and recommend himself to the divine favour, and so escape hell and obtain heaven : and when he has grown so good, as to have raised hopes of attaining his end, he is ravished at the thoughts, and blesses the Lord, and loves him. It is plain all this is hypocrisy : for the man in truth, only loves himself, and is concerned merely for his own interest ; but does not care at all for God, his glory or honour : for, if there were no heaven nor hell, such would serve God no more. Children will work for their parents, without being hired, because they love them : but hirelings will not strike a stroke if there is no money to be gotten ; because they care for nothing but their own interest. Hence this sort of hypocrites are wont to say, that if they once believed that God had made no promises to the best they can do, they would never do more. And further, it is plainly all hypocrisy ; for, if their consciences but fall asleep, so that they



are troubled no more with the thoughts of another world, they will leave off their duties, let down their watch, and be as bad as ever.— These hypocrites (he adds further) are also concerned greatly to find out what the least measure of saving grace is, all they are after being only to get just grace enough to carry them to heaven; as a lazy hireling, who is for doing but only just work enough to pass for a day's work, that he may get his wages at night, which is all he wants."

II. *Another distinguishing sign of a truly renewed and gracious state, is desiring holiness for its own sake, out of a regard to holiness, and not on account of any reward or happiness it will bring to us here or hereafter.*

It is easy for the most carnal of men to desire that which they think will be greatly to their advantage, and earnestly to seek after it, when, at the same time, they have no liking to the thing in itself; it is wholly disagreeable unto them. As a man that is sick earnestly desires, and seeks to obtain, a disagreeable or bitter medicine, which he supposes will free him from pain, or save him from death; when, at the same time, it is loathsome unto him in itself, and he desires it only for the sake of the benefit he expects to receive from it. To desire holiness from this principle, is no sign at all that one is in a renewed or gracious state, because it is consistent with the most depraved heart to desire holiness on such a principle. But to

desire and seek after holiness for its own sake, out of a regard or love to holiness as it is in itself, without any respect to the reward or happiness it will bring to us in this life, or in the life to come, is something beyond what any natural man can do, while in a natural state. And hence it is a distinguishing sign of a truly renewed and gracious state.

That those who are in a renewed and gracious state desire holiness from this principle, nothing is more certain. They desire to be holy out of love to holiness, by reason of its own beauty and excellency; and were there no reward or happiness annexed to being holy, holiness would be no less lovely or desirable unto them, nor would they be less disposed to seek after it. This regard and love to holiness, influences all the true disciples of the Lord Jesus. For the sake of holiness they would freely forsake all things, and live on bread and water all their days. It is their earnest desire, and they sincerely seek to have every wrong temper, desire and disposition done away out of their hearts; and any deviation from the holiness and purity required by the gospel, causes pain and regret to their minds, and they are grieved and distressed on account thereof.

And here I cannot but remark, that there are those making high professions in the present day, who are quick in resentment, clamorous at their houses, and much given to dis-

simulation and deceit; and what is worst of all, they do not appear to feel any sorrow or regret on account of these things, but are quite easy and tranquil as if they were altogether innocent. These, I must confess, are a curious sort of christians, and it is hard to say which we are to be most astonished at; either their impudence, in keeping up a profession of religion while they go on in this way, or their ignorance, in not seeing that they are in the broad road that leads to destruction. People that are striving against their besetments, and desire in sincerity to be delivered from all sin, and take blame to themselves, whenever they deviate in any degree from the holy law of God, I feel pity towards, and love; but as for those who give way to their evil tempers, and bring the greatest dishonour on the cause of religion, and still look upon themselves as innocent, and entitled to the appellation of saints, I consider them as the worst of men; and it would be infinitely better for themselves and the cause of religion, if they would lay aside all their pretensions to religion, and be no longer stumbling blocks to thousands of those who are without, and who, through these things, lose all respect whatever for religion.

III. *Again, those who are in a truly renewed and gracious state, come out from the world and deny themselves, of whatsoever appertains to the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eye, and the pride of life, and persevere in a way of obedi-*

*ence to the divine commands, not for the sake of getting to heaven, or to escape hell, but out of a sincere regard to the will of God, and a love to that which is right.*

It is no great matter, for a person to cross his inclination in a very great degree, with regard to some things, in order to have it gratified in others. Nay, where is the man to be found, who will not submit to many things, very hard and difficult to nature, and perform what is very contrary to his own inclination, for the sake of some great benefit or happiness to be obtained thereby? But this, strictly speaking, is no self-denial at all. It is often even self-gratification, giving up a less good for a greater; and there is no real virtue whatever in it, how much soever we may do with any such view. "Says one, "A man may give all his goods to the poor, and devote his whole life to the most severe discipline, and practise the greatest austerities imaginable; and then give his body to be burned, with a view to escape hell and obtain heaven; and yet if he has not that charity, which *seeketh not her own*, but does and suffers all wholly under the influence of self-love, there is no true self-denial in it; but it is really self-gratification, and pleasing himself, as much as if he indulged his sensual appetites in riot and wantonness; and there is really no more true religion in it. For there is no more true holiness in desiring and seeking eternal happiness in a selfish way, and from self-love,

than there is in desiring and seeking any temporal worldly enjoyment." He also states, that there is no real self-denial in all the abstinences, fastings, prayers, labours, and re-formations practised and performed, both in the catholic and protestant world, when done with a view to obtain heaven. But by the way, he observes, that the heaven and happiness which these selfish persons are seeking by all their pains, is no more like the true happiness of heaven than the Mahometan paradise.

He continues, "The most selfish creature in the world may part with one good for the sake of another, by which he greatly crosses some of his inclinations and appetites; and may go through great labour and sufferings, purely to please himself, or gratify his self-love. Thus a man may give up his ease, and practise hard service and toil throughout a whole year, for the sake of the wages he is to receive, while he is wholly selfish in what he does and suffers, having no regard to any other interest but his own. So a man may be willing to do and suffer many things, and cross many of his own natural inclinations to a great degree, for the sake of his eternal interest, that he may obtain salvation, purely from self-love. In this there is no self-denial."

He adds again, "Whatever temporary good any one gives up for the sake of his own eternal interest, and wholly from self-love, he is, by the supposition, as selfish in this, as he can be in any thing whatsoever; and therefore

there is no self-denial in it, if self-denial be acting contrary to self, or denying ourselves. So that he who does not know how to deny himself with respect to his eternal interest, is really a stranger to self-denial. To give up our own temporal, worldly interest, for the sake of eternal happiness, wholly under the influence of self-love, is as real an instance of selfishness, as parting with all we have now, to possess a large estate the next year. Therefore, if no person can renounce his eternal interest, in opposition to a selfish regard to it, there is no such thing in nature as self-denial, or disinterested affection. But let it be kept in mind, that in the practice of the greatest self-denial, a person does not divest himself of a love of happiness: for this is impossible, as well as contrary to the supposition. But he places his happiness, not in his own private interest; but in a good more worthy to be sought, viz: the glory of God, and the prosperity of his kingdom. For the sake of this, he gives up the former, and forgets himself."

I would here remark, that it is infinitely reasonable and proper, that we should love the Lord *more* than ourselves, and, on all occasions, prefer *his* interest to our own; unless indeed, it can be made to appear, that we are as good as the Lord, and our interest is of as much consequence as that of the most High; a thing, I presume, no one will attempt to do.

"Christ, (observes a writer,) when speaking of self-denial, says; 'Whosoever will save

his life shall lose it ; but whosoever shall lose his life for *my sake* and the *gospel's*, the same shall save it.' That is, he who is so selfish, as not to be willing to deny himself, and give up his own interest, even all of it, for my sake, out of a disinterested regard to me and my kingdom, shall miss of all true happiness, and must necessarily lose it for ever. But he, who in the exercise of disinterested affection, denies himself for Christ's sake and the *gospel's*, and places his happiness in Christ's honour and interest, shall be really happy, and secure his highest interest for ever." Though a person, therefore, by giving himself to Christ in the exercise of disinterested affection, and denying himself for *his sake*, is in the most direct and effectual way to true happiness, and to secure and promote his highest interest ; yet it does not hence follow, that he seeks his own happiness and interest, in giving himself to Christ and denying himself for his sake. This involves a contradiction, being the same as to say he is selfish, in renouncing self. On the contrary, he gives himself up and denies himself, without any view to his own happiness or interest, as much as if it were in no wise thereby secured or promoted. Were it not so, he could not be said to lose his life for Christ's sake and the *gospel's*, since it would be for his own sake, or his own interest.

This will more fully appear, from other passages of scripture of a like nature. Christ has declared, that they who humble themselves,

shall be exalted : but should any one seek to humble himself with a view to be exalted, it would only be exercising his pride, and making himself a greater sinner ; and instead of being any compliance with the requirement to be humble, it would be the transgression of it, and he would receive nothing but condemnation. In short, whatever regard we may profess towards the Lord, or whatever we may do under pretence of serving him, if we are influenced therein by self-love, or have a regard only to our own interest, it is of no account in God's sight—he accepts it not.

“ Let any one (says a late writer) consult his own sense, whether he accepts that as true respect and love from any one, which appears to be wholly selfish ; being nothing but a regard for benefit to himself, which he hopes to receive from him. He will at once feel, that this has nothing of the nature of true love ; but is a mean sordid affection, which he cannot but despise. And this is the sense of all mankind, in their own case ; however they may put off their Maker with such selfish affection, and think he will accept it at their hands, as true love and holiness. Thus the degenerate priests of Israel offered that to God, which would affront their governor, had they offered it to him, nor would they accept it from their neighbour.” See Malicha i. 8.

Indeed, all that seeming respect which people may have to the Lord through love to themselves, and all those performances they may perform for the sake of their own inter-



est, or through a grudging spirit, is no respect or obedience *to the Lord* at all ; nor does the Lord account it as such : it is only a feigned hypocritical show of respect and obedience.— Selfish performances are, in a word, as no performances in the Lord's sight ; and let us profess, do, or perform ever so much, if we have only a selfish eye to a reward, to our own interest or honor, or whatever else self may dictate, we shall never receive any other reward from the Lord but condemnation. The Scribes and Pharisees were v̄ery religious, performed a great many duties, and they expected, no doubt, the reward of eternal life on account of their great doings ; but inasmuch as they had a regard solely to themselves in all they did, they were no better in God's sight than Publicans and Harlots, who were the vilest of men ; and instead of receiving a reward from the Lord, for their long prayers and selfish performances, our Saviour declared, they should only receive the greater damnation.

Christ, in the most particular manner, cautioned his disciples against being governed by a regard to themselves in their performances, assuring them, if they were, they would have no reward of their Father in heaven ; but commanded them expressly to “ do good and lend, hoping for nothing again,” and told them, if they did this, their reward should be great, since the action would then be acceptable, and they should be called the children of the Highest.

This doctrine, I know, does not suit the selfish votaries of religion in the present day; it is too pure and close for them; they oppose it with the utmost vehemence: and no wonder—for being, like the Jews before them, perfectly unregenerate in their hearts, after all their high professions, they find themselves incapable of acting from any higher principle than self-love; and therefore they strive to maintain the propriety of this principle, with all their might; well knowing, that unless it can be made to stand, all their fine prospects of heaven must fall to the ground. But it is sufficient for me, that the doctrine I contend for was taught by the blessed Redeemer; the foundation on which it stands is, therefore, as immovable as the gospel itself; and the gates of hell, (whatever efforts they may make to effect its overthrow,) will never be able entirely to prevail against it. A little few, who alone make up the true church of Christ on the earth, will, I trust, be found in every age living under the influence of this blessed and heavenly principle, not serving themselves, but the Lord, not seeking their own good, but the good of others—yet how blind are most people on this subject in the present day! how far removed from such a disposition in their life and conduct! and what multitudes fight against it as a dangerous heresy! not knowing that, in endeavouring to overthrow it, they are endeavouring to overthrow the very doctrine which Christ himself taught.

It is by reason of these things the world is now so full of deceitful, worldly, selfish professors of religion, and so many who have appeared to have true enjoyment in religion, are fallen into the lowest condition possible, in no wise able to raise up themselves, while all the while they are ignorant of the cause of this great reverse in their condition, and are perhaps striving to uphold the very principle which has destroyed all their own true peace, and which is the most ruinous that can possibly enter into the hearts of men.

But, says one, Has not the Lord laid down such and such commands and precepts, and promised, if we observe and do them, he will bestow such and such rewards upon us, &c. &c. I would ask such an one, where in all the Bible is any reward promised to one that observes these commands and precepts, only out of a regard to himself, from self-love, or for the sake of obtaining a reward? I answer, no where. On the contrary, the scriptures abound with instances of persons, who observed all the external commands and ordinances of the Lord, and were exceeding strict and attentive to all his written laws, and after all, were only an abomination in his sight, and had no reward whatever but condemnation. The scriptures are full of instances of this kind, as every one who has read them well knows.\*

\* I would by no means be considered as dissuading people from avoiding sin and attending to the commands of God, out of regard to their own eternal interests: for it

But one will say, did not Moses act from a different principle than the one you are pleading for, in having respect to the recompense of reward when he left the court of Pharaoh, and turned to his people Israel? To decide on this point, it will be necessary to enquire what was the recompense of reward Moses had respect to? Was it then his own interest and happiness in the other world; that he had in view in doing what he did? or was it any honor or advantage he expected to derive to himself in this life? I judge not. I would not dare to think thus meanly of Moses, so high in favour with God. No, the recompense of reward he had respect to, was, no doubt, the divine favour, and an opportunity of rendering to his oppressed and afflicted brethren the most important services; every thing in his conduct seems to bespeak this to be the recompense of reward he had respect to.\* This now was a

has been shewn before, that people unregenerate, can act from no higher principle than self-love, or a regard to themselves; and it is wisdom, at least, to observe the commands of the Lord from this principle. Nor will it be any hurt to them, but may be an advantage, provided they do not look upon the actions so done as any thing in point of virtue, or as being good works. But this, people are exceedingly apt to do; and in case they do it, it will seal them up in delusion, and prove their final ruin.

\* It may not be unsuitable in this place to make a short extract from another publication treating on this case of Moses—"I should be truly sorry to suppose Moses such a selfish character as many of the advocates for self love endeavour to prove him to be—though by the bye, I would observe, provided there even was any thing of a selfish na-

recompense of reward worthy of this eminent servant of the Lord to have respect to; and it is a recompense of reward no one can have too much respect to, or sacrifice too much for the sake of obtaining. It is a recompense of

ture that influenced Moses when he first left Egypt, and he had respect to any reward after a selfish manner, it will make nothing on the side of the doctrine of selfishness: for the question is not whether people are ever actuated by a selfish principle, (for this is admitted,) but whether a selfish principle is a truly virtuous principle of action; and it will be difficult to prove that Moses had attained to any large share of true virtue at that time. [A little before he had killed the Egyptian.] He certainly could not have advanced very far in a way of virtue, if he had an eye only to some selfish reward, in the manner some suppose. But to proceed—Whatever Moses was at first, and whatever principles might have once influenced him, he certainly came to possess a true disinterested principle of heart at last. This fully appears from his refusing to accept the offer made to him by the Lord himself, of making of him a great nation; from his prayer in behalf of the children of Israel, and from his receiving no honour or emolument to himself whatever, during the whole of his administration. So free, indeed, was he from a selfish disposition, that he gave no privileges or prerogatives whatever to his own children. Nay, he even leaves them out, without noticing them at all, in his genealogy of others; a very remarkable instance of meekness and disinterestedness indeed. See Numbers iii. 1. Adam Clarke in his notes on this place remarks: ‘Moses passes by his own family, or immediate descendants; he gave no rank or privilege to them during his life, and left nothing to them at his death. They became incorporated with the Levites from amongst whom they are never distinguished. What a strong proof is this of the celestial origin of his religion! Had it been of men, it must have had the gratification of some impure passion for its object; lust, ambition, or avarice; but none of these ever appear during the whole of his administration among the Israelites, though he had it continually in his power to have gratified each.’

reward divine love itself has respect to, even that love which seeketh not her own, and which the most disinterested affection towards others leads one to desire.

“ If (says one) the recompense of reward to which Moses had respect, consisted in being confirmed in God’s service and favour forever, and put under the greatest advantages to glorify God, and promote the interest of his church, and in seeing this accomplished to the highest degree : then there was nothing selfish in this, but it was the genuine exercise of that disinterested religion, which consists in love to God and our neighbour. The disinterested, benevolent person seeks a recompense of reward, as much as any other person can, and more ; but it is a reward with which benevolence itself is well pleased, and not selfishness. Selfishness never seeks the reward which God gives his people ; this is suited to gratify benevolence only : therefore it is respected and sought only in the exercise of benevolence.”

Moses truly was no such selfish character as some would make him to be—he appears indeed to have possessed the most disinterested affection ; for when the Lord was minded to destroy the rebellious Israelites, and proposed to make of him a great nation, he seemed no wise forward to accept this great benefit for himself—he betrayed nothing of a selfish disposition on this occasion. Nay, such was his regard to the children of Israel, and such his desire for their preservation, that he seems

entirely to have lost sight of himself; and besought the Lord, sooner than not forgive their sin to blot him out of the book he had written. Now the language of selfishness would have been, "Spare me, oh Lord, whatever becomes of them." And if Moses was so selfish as some have judged him to be, we can hardly suppose he would have omitted so good an opportunity of making himself a great one in the earth, by being the father of a great nation, peculiarly exalted and protected of the Lord, to hand down his name with renown to the latest posterity. It may, I think, in truth be said of Moses, that he sought *not his own*, and was *meek* above all the men which were upon the earth, for we do not read of his ever putting forward either of his sons to any station of honor or interest whatever, or showing the least desire for either his own or their aggrandisement, promotion or interest; his whole desire, from first to last, appearing to be, to obey the commands of the Lord, and do all possible service to the children of Israel.

Again, some have endeavoured to establish the doctrine of selfishness from the example of Christ himself. For 'do we not read, (say they,) it was for the joy set before him, that he endured the cross and despised the shame?' But here they are just about as much mistaken, as in the other place concerning Moses. Indeed, Moses and the Lord Jesus Christ, appear both to have been moved by the same divine principle, in what they did and suffered.

For, I ask again, what was the joy set before the Lord Jesus, causing him to endure the cross and despise the shame? Was it not the joy of seeing sinners brought home to his heavenly Father, constituted his adopted children, and made completely happy in the enjoyment of his favour forever? without any manner of doubt. This is the joy of angels. How pure, how disinterested, how divine now this joy! how free from every thing like self-seeking.

Christ indeed was not selfish; the glory of God and the good of men, was alone what he sought; and unless we also are like minded, he will never own us as his disciples. "I seek not mine own glory, (says the blessed Redeemer,) but the glory of him that sent me;" and we know that he laid down his life, and suffered, not for his own sake, not with a view to any benefit for himself, but for our sakes, and our benefit. O divine love! O heavenly disposition! This disposition reigns in the hearts of all Christ's true disciples; and whoever does not partake of it, in such a degree as that it may be said, *they seek not their own*, whatever light or knowledge they may have, however much they may do, or what great things soever they may suffer, we are well assured they are nothing in the sight of God.

So unwilling are the advocates for self-love to allow that there is nay such thing as acting from a higher principle than self, (Satan moreover was not willing to allow that Job feared God for naught,) that they have not scrupled



to resolve every thing, even the most benevolent actions into self-love. Say they, "Do what you will, it is only self-love that influences you to it: yea, when you do any thing from a benevolent principle of heart, without any view to a reward or prospect of recompense, still it is self-love that moves you to it: for you do it to gratify yourself, and please yourself, and therefore it is self-love." But here again, their arguments all fall to the ground; because when we do any thing for another from a true benevolent principle, it is not done with any design or view whatever to gratify or please ourselves, but solely for the person's benefit and advantage, or to promote his welfare. We may experience a satisfaction and enjoyment it is certain in doing another a favour, or in promoting his welfare, (for it is one of the immutable laws of a righteous Creator, that we shall experience satisfaction in doing a benevolent action or favour to a fellow creature,) but it does not follow from hence, that we do it in order to experience that satisfaction or enjoyment; for the reverse is undoubtedly the case in a truly benevolent action—a person having no view whatever to his own gratification in what he does. He does not thus reason; To do such or such a thing for another, will be a gratification to me, and please me, and accordingly does it in order to gratify himself and please himself. No, this never comes into consideration before him; he does it to no such end, but purely out of a regard to the person he

does it for, and solely in order to assist him or promote his welfare. No other motive whatever influences one in a truly benevolent action. Provided a person does have any motive to please and gratify himself in doing a favour to another, and this leads him to do it, then I will admit that it is self-love to all intents and purposes: but I assert, as before, that in a truly benevolent action, no such motive does in the least influence one, and it is folly to reason against what is so plain and undeniable.

I shall notice one more plea which has been made use of to support the cause of selfishness, as follows: "If all self-love (say some) is to be renounced, then all love of our neighbour is renounced along with it, because the commandment is, only to *love our neighbour as ourselves*." To this Wm. Law replies; "The answer here is easy, and yet no quarter given to self-love. The one supreme unchangeable rule of love, which is a law to all intelligent beings in all worlds, and will be a law to all eternity, is this, viz. That God is to be loved for Himself, and all other beings only in him, and for him. Now, if God alone is to be loved for himself, then no creature is to be loved for itself; and so all self-love, in every creature, is absolutely condemned. This (says he) is the one love that is and must be the spirit of all creatures, that live united to God. The loss of this love was the fall of man, as it opened in him a kingdom of self, in which Satan, the world and the flesh, could all of them bring

forth their works. If, therefore, man is to rise from his fall, and return to his life in God, there is an absolute necessity that self, with all his brood of gross affections, be deposed, that his first love, in and for which he was created, may be born again in him." He adds, "Self is not only the seat and habitation, but the very life of sin. The works of the devil are all wrought in self, it is his peculiar work-house, and therefore Christ is not come as a Saviour from sin, as a destroyer of the works of the devil in any of us, but so far as self is beaten down and overcome in us."

Another extract from Wm. Law will not, I think, be unsuitable in this place. "Saith Christ, unless a man forsake *all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple*. The reason is plain: because all that the natural man hath is in the possession of self-love, and therefore this possession is to be absolutely forsaken, and parted with. All that he hath is to be put into other hands, to be given to divine love, or this natural man cannot be changed into a disciple of Christ. For self-love, in all it hath, is earthly, sensual and devilish, and therefore must have all taken away from it; and then to the natural man all is lost, he hath nothing left, all is laid down at the feet of Jesus. And then the disciple of Christ, though having nothing, yet possesseth all things.—This was the spirit of the first Christian church at Jerusalem; a church made truly after the pattern of heaven, where the love that reigna

in heaven reigned in it, where divine love broke down all the selfish fences, the locks and bolts of me, mine, my own, &c. and laid all things common to the members of this new kingdom of God on earth: For love is quite pure; it hath no bye ends; it seeks not its own. It is of no sect or party; it neither makes nor admits of any bounds; you may as easily enclose the light, or shut up the air of the world into one place, as confine love to a sect or party. It unites with all that is good; is meek, patient, well-wishing; and its meat and drink is to do the will of God. And though many years did not pass after the age of the apostles, before Satan and self got footing in the church, and set up merchandise in the house of God; yet this one heart, and one spirit, which then first appeared in the Jerusalem church, is that one heart and spirit of divine love, to which all are called, that would be true disciples of Christ. For though the practice of it is lost as to the church in general, yet it ought not to have been lost; and therefore every christian ought to make it his great care, and prayer, to have it restored in himself."

I have dwelt the longer on this subject, because it is of so much importance that we should consider it well: for "Self-love (says one) is in its whole nature, and in every degree of it, enmity against God: And if there be any sin, any thing which is contrary to the divine law, it is briefly comprehended in this fruitful source of all iniquity, SELF-LOVE." I

shall conclude by an extract from a writer already referred to.

“There are many who make self-love the foundation of all religion, and represent it wholly as a selfish thing, from beginning to end. But he who comes to the knowledge of the truth, fixes on something infinitely more important than *self*, and his own personal interest, as the object of his regard and pursuit. He from that moment devotes himself to the glory of God, and the advancement of his kingdom. From this time he begins to pray, and say, ‘Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as in heaven.’ And it now becomes his study and labour, to promote this grand interest, by serving God and his generation; and thus he seeks first the kingdom of God. He whose religious discoveries, views and exercises are not of this kind, and do not issue in this, may safely conclude himself a stranger to true religion.—If this most fundamental difference between true religion and false, were attended to by public teachers; and they laboured to keep it in view, in all their descriptions of the christian character, and set the doctrines and precepts of the gospel in this light; it would tend to kill the false comfort and confidence of those who have a selfish religion, and undeceive them: and on the contrary, it would tend greatly to the instruction, enlargement and joy of the true friends of God, and his kingdom. But, instead of this, how common

is it to hear the preacher speak of religion, as if it consisted altogether in selfishness! To represent the hopes and fears, the joys and sorrows, and all the exercises of the christian, as wholly selfish, and treat all the doctrines and duties of christianity in this light! How common to find Armenians, Calvinists, Antinomians, or whatever other name they may bear, and however they may differ in other things, all agreeing in this! This is to stun and starve the christian; and feed and strengthen such as have a lie in their right hand."

*IV. Those who are in a truly renewed and gracious state, have a reasonable and spiritual conviction of the judgment, of the reality and certainty of divine things.*

"All those (says president Edwards) who are truly gracious persons, have a solid, full, thorough and effectual conviction of the truth of the great things of the gospel; I mean that they no longer halt between two opinions; the great doctrines of the gospel cease to be any longer doubtful things, or matters of opinion, which though probable are yet disputable; but with them they are points settled and determined, as undoubted and indisputable; so that they are not afraid to venture their all upon their truth. Their conviction is an effectual conviction; so that the great, spiritual, mysterious, and invisible things of the gospel, have the influence of real and certain things upon them; they have the weight and power

of real things in their hearts ; and accordingly rule in their affections, and govern them through the course of their lives. With respect to Christ's being the Son of God, and Saviour of the world, and the great things he has revealed concerning himself, and his Father, and another world, they have not only a predominating opinion that these things are true, and so yield their assent, as they do in many other matters of doubtful speculation ; but they see that it is really so : and therefore these things are of great weight with them, and have a mighty power upon their hearts, and influence over their practice, in some measure answerable to their infinite importance.

“ There are many religious affections, which are not attended with such a conviction of the judgment. There are many apprehensions and ideas which some have, that they call divine discoveries, which are affecting, but not convincing. Though for a little while they may seem to be more persuaded of the truth of the things of religion than they used to be, and may yield a forward assent, like many of Christ's hearers, who believed for a while ; yet they have no thorough and effectual conviction. There are many persons who have been exceedingly raised with religious affections, and think they have been converted, that do not go about the world any more convinced of the truth of the gospel, than they used to be ; or at least, there is no remarkable alteration : they are not men who live under the in-

fluence and power of a realizing conviction of the infinite and eternal things which the gospel reveals; if they were, it would be impossible for them to live as they do. Because their affections are not attended with a thorough conviction of the mind, they are not at all to be depended on; however great a show and noise they make, it is like the blaze of tow, or the forward flourishing blade on stony ground, that has no root, nor deepness of earth to maintain its life.

“But if the religious affections that persons have, do indeed arise from a strong persuasion of the truth of the christian religion; their affections are not the better, unless their persuasion be a reasonable persuasion or conviction. By a reasonable conviction, I mean a conviction founded on real evidence, or upon that which is a good reason, or just ground of conviction.—Men may have a strong persuasion that the christian religion is true, when their persuasion is not at all built on evidence, but altogether on education, and the opinion of others; as many Mahometans are strongly persuaded of the truth of the Mahometan religion, because their fathers, and neighbours, and nation believe it. That belief of the truth of the christian religion, which is built on the very same grounds with a Mahometan’s belief of the Mahometan religion, is the same sort of belief. And though the thing believed happens to be better, yet that does not make the belief itself to be of a bet-



ter sort; for though the thing believed happens to be true, yet the belief of it is not owing to the truth, but education. So that as the conviction is no better than the Mahometan's conviction, so the affections that flow from it, are no better, in themselves, than the religious affections of Mahometans.

“But if that belief of christian doctrines, which persons affections arise from, be not merely from education, but indeed from reasons and arguments which are offered, it will not thence necessarily follow, that their affections are truly gracious: for in order to that, it is requisite, not only that the belief which their affections arise from, should be a reasonable, but also a spiritual belief or conviction. I suppose none will doubt but that some natural men do yield a kind of assent of their judgments to the truth of the christian religion, from the rational proofs or arguments that are offered to evince it. Judas without doubt, thought Jesus to be the Messiah from the things which he saw and heard; but yet was a devil. So we read of many that believed in Christ's name, when they saw the miracles that he did; whom yet Christ knew had not that within them, which was to be depended on. So Simon the sorcerer believed, when he beheld the miracles and signs which were done; but yet remained in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity. And if there is such a belief or assent of the judgment in some natural men, none can doubt but that re-

ligious affections may arise from that assent or belief; as we read of some who believed for a while, that were greatly affected, and anon with joy received the word.

“It is evident that there is such a thing as a spiritual belief or conviction of the truth of the things of the gospel, or a belief that is peculiar to those who are regenerated, and have the Spirit of God, in his holy communications, dwelling in them as a vital principle. So that the conviction they have, does not only differ from that which natural men have, in that it is accompanied with good works, but the belief itself is diverse; the assent and conviction of the judgment is of a kind peculiar to those who are regenerated, and which natural men are wholly destitute of. This is evident by the scripture, if any thing at all is so.

“Now, the conviction of the judgment arises from the illumination of the understanding; and therefore it follows, that a spiritual conviction of the truth of the great things of the gospel, is such a conviction as arises from having a spiritual view or apprehension of those things in the mind. And this is also evident from the scripture, which often represents, that a saving belief of the reality and divinity of the things proposed and exhibited to us in the gospel, is from the spirit of God enlightening the mind, to have right apprehensions of the nature of those things, and so as it were unveiling things, or revealing them,

and enabling the mind to view them and see them as they are. As it is written—‘For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.’ And, again—‘We all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord.’ This view or sense of the divine glory, and unparelled beauty of the things exhibited to us in the gospel, directly convinces the mind of the divinity of these things, as the glory is in itself a direct, clear, and all-conquering evidence of it; especially when clearly discovered, or when this supernatural sense is given in a good degree.

“He that has his judgment thus directly convinced and assured of the divinity of the things of the gospel, by a clear view of their divine glory, has a reasonable conviction; his belief and assurance is altogether agreeable to reason; because the divine glory and beauty of divine things itself, is in real evidence of their divinity, and the most direct and strong evidence. He that truly sees the divine, transcendent, supreme glory of those things which are divine, does as it were know their divinity intuitively: he not only argues that they are divine, but he sees that they are divine; he sees that in them wherein divinity chiefly consists; for in this glory, which is so

vastly and inexpressibly distinguished from the glory of artificial things and all other glory, does mainly consist the true notion of divinity. God is God ; and distinguished from all other beings, and exalted above them, chiefly by his divine beauty, which is infinitely diverse from all other beauty. They therefore that see the stamp of his glory in divine things, see divinity in them, they see God in them, and so see them to be divine ; because they see that in them wherein the truest idea of divinity does consist.—Thus a soul may have a kind of intuitive knowledge of the divinity of the things exhibited in the gospel : not that he judges the doctrines of the gospel to be from God, without any argument or deduction at all ; but it is without any long chain of arguments ; the argument is but one, and the evidence direct ; the mind ascends to the truth of the gospel but by one step, and that is its divine glory.

“ It would be very strange, if any professing christian should deny it to be possible, that there should be an excellency in divine things, which is so transcendent and so exceedingly different from what is in other things, that if it were seen, would evidently distinguish them. We cannot rationally doubt, but that things that are divine, that appertain to the Supreme Being, are vastly different from things that are human : that there is a God-like, high, and glorious excellency in them, that does so distinguish them from the things

that are of men, that the difference is ineffable; and therefore such, as if seen, will have a most convincing, satisfying influence upon any one, that they are divine. Now the distinguishing glory of the divine Being has its brightest appearance and manifestation, in the things proposed and exhibited in the gospel, the doctrines there taught, the word there spoken, and the divine counsels, acts and works there revealed. These things have the clearest, most admirable, and distinguishing representations and exhibitions of the glory of God's moral perfections, that ever were made to the world. And if there be such a distinguishing, evidential manifestation of divine glory in the gospel, it is reasonable to suppose that there may be such a thing as seeing it: what should hinder but that it may be seen? It is no argument that it cannot be seen, that some do not see it; though they may be discerning men in temporal matters. For if there be such ineffable, distinguishing, evidential excellencies in the gospel, it is reasonable to suppose that they are such as are not to be discerned, but by the special influence and enlightenings of the spirit of God.

“A sense of the spiritual excellency and beauty of divine things, does also tend directly to convince the mind of the truth of the gospel, as there are very many of the most important things declared in the gospel, that are hid from the eyes of natural men, the truth of which does in effect consist in this excellen-

cy, or does so immediately depend upon it, that in this excellency's being seen, the truth of those things is seen. For as soon as ever the eyes are opened to behold the holy beauty and amiableness that is in divine things, a multitude of important doctrines of the gospel that depend upon it, (which all appear strange and dark to natural men,) are at once seen to be true. He now sees the dreadful pollution of his heart, and the desperate depravity of his nature, in a new manner; and this shows him the truth of what the scripture reveals concerning the corruption of man's nature, his original sin, and the ruinous, undone condition man is in, and his need of a Saviour, his need of the mighty power of God to renew his heart and change his nature; and he sees the fitness and suitableness of the way of salvation by Christ, the admirable wisdom of the contrivance, and the perfect answerableness of the provision that the gospel exhibits, (as made for us,) to our necessities. A sense of true divine beauty being given to the soul, the soul discerns the beauty of every part of the gospel scheme.— And besides all this, the truth of all those things which the scripture says about experimental religion, is hereby known; for they are now experienced. And this convinces the soul, that one who knew the heart of man, better than we know our own hearts, and perfectly knew the nature of virtue and holiness, was the author of the scriptures. And the opening to view, with such clearness, such a

world of wonderful and glorious truths in the gospel, that were before unknown, being quite above the view of a natural eye, but now appearing so clear and bright, has a powerful and invincible influence on the soul, to persuade it of the divinity of the gospel.

“Unless men may come to a reasonable, solid persuasion and conviction of the truth of the gospel, by the internal evidences of it, in the way that has been spoken of, *viz.* by a sight of its glory; it is impossible that those who are illiterate, and unacquainted with history, should have any thorough and effectual conviction of it at all. They may without this, see a great deal of probability of it; it may be reasonable for them to give much credit to what learned men and historians tell them; and they may tell them so much, that it may look very probable and rational to them, that the christian religion is true; and so much that they would be very unreasonable not to entertain this opinion. But to have a conviction, so clear, and evident, and assuring, as to be sufficient to induce them, with boldness to sell all, confidently and fearlessly to run the venture of the loss of all things, and of enduring the most exquisite and long-continued torments, and to trample the world under foot, and count all things but dross for Christ; the evidence they can have from history, cannot be sufficient. After all that learned men have said to them, there will remain innumerable doubts on their minds; they will be

ready, when pinched with some great trial of their faith, to say, 'How do I know this or that,' &c. &c.

"But the gospel was not given only for learned men. There are at least nineteen in twenty, if not ninety-nine in an hundred, of those for whom the scriptures were written, that are not capable of any certain or effectual conviction of the divine authority of the scriptures, by such arguments as learned men make use of. If men who have been brought up in heathenism, must wait for a clear and certain conviction of the truth of christianity, until they have learning and acquaintance with the histories of politer nations, enough to see clearly the force of such kind of arguments ; it will make the evidence of the gospel to them immensely cumbersome ; and will render the propagation of the gospel among them infinitely difficult. We may therefore rationally suppose and conclude, that there is some sort of evidence, that the christian religion is true, beyond all mere probability ; that there are some grounds of assurance, which, if we were not blind to them, would tend to give a higher persuasion, than any arguing from history, human tradition, &c. which the illiterate and unacquainted with history are capable of: yea, that which is good ground of the highest and most perfect assurance. But that a full and perfect assurance is not to be attained by the greater part of them who live under the gospel, by arguments fetched from



ancient traditions, histories and monuments, has already been shewn.

“And if we come to fact and experience, there is not the least reason to suppose, that one in a hundred of those who have been sincere christians, and have had a heart to sell all for Christ, have come by their conviction of the truth of the gospel this way. If we read over the histories of the many thousands that died Martyrs for Christ, since the reformation, and have cheerfully undergone extreme tortures, in a confidence of the truth of the gospel, and consider their circumstances and advantages ; how few of them there were, that we can reasonably suppose, ever came by their assured persuasion this way ; or indeed for whom it was possible, to receive so full and strong an assurance, from such arguments ! Many of them were weak women and children, and the greater part of them were illiterate persons, many of whom had been brought up in popish ignorance and darkness, and were but newly come out of it, and lived and died in times wherein those arguments for the truth of christianity, from antiquity and history, had been but imperfectly handled. And indeed, it is but very lately that these things have been set in a clear and convincing light, even by learned men themselves : and since it has been done, there never were fewer thorough believers among those who have been educated in the true religion ; infidelity never prevailed so much in any age, as in this, (1700,) where-

in these arguments are handled to the greatest advantage.

“The true Martyrs of Jesus Christ are not those who have only been strong in opinion that the gospel of Christ is true, but those that have seen the truth of it; as the very name of Martyrs or witnesses in scripture implies. Those are very improperly called witnesses of the truth of any thing, who only declare they are much of opinion that such a thing is true. Those only are proper witnesses, who can, and do testify that they have seen the truth of the thing they assert. Thus, ‘We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen.’ ‘And we have seen and do testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.’—‘The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldst know his will, and see that just one, and shouldst hear the voice of his mouth; for thou shalt be his witness unto all men, of what thou hast seen and heard.’ But the true Martyrs of Jesus Christ are called his witnesses; and all the saints, who by their holy practice under great trials, declare that faith which is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen, are called witnesses, because by their profession and practice, they declare their assurance of the truth and divinity of the gospel, having had the eyes of their mind enlightened to see the divinity in the gospel, or to behold that unparalleled, ineffably excellent, and truly divine glory shining in it,

which is altogether distinguishing, evidential, and convincing: so that they may truly be said to have seen God in it, and to have seen that it is indeed divine; and so can speak in the style of witnesses; and not only say, that they think the gospel is divine, but say, that it is divine, giving it in as their testimony, because they have seen it to be so. But yet it must be noted, that among those who have a spiritual sight of the divine glory of the gospel, there is a great variety of degrees of strength of faith, as there is a vast variety of the degrees of clearness of views of this glory: but there is no true and saving faith, or spiritual conviction of the judgment of the truth of the gospel, that has nothing in it, of this manifestation of its internal evidence, in some degree. The gospel of the blessed God does not go abroad a begging for its evidence, so much as some think; it has its highest and most proper evidence in itself. Though great use may be made of external arguments, they are not to be neglected, but highly prized and valued; for they may be greatly serviceable to awaken unbelievers, and bring them to a serious consideration, and to confirm the faith of true saints: yea, they may be in some respects subservient to the begetting of a saving faith in men. Though what was said before, remains true, that there is no spiritual conviction of the judgment, but what arises from an apprehension of the spiritual beauty and glory of divine things.

“What has been said, may serve in some measure to shew the nature of a spiritual conviction of the judgment of the truth and reality of divine things : and so to distinguish truly gracious affections from others ; for gracious affections are evermore attended with such a conviction of the judgment.”

*V. Another distinguishing sign of a truly renewed and gracious state, is a humble, meek and lowly mind.*

“Humility and lowliness of mind, are essential in true religion. They that are not of a humble and lowly mind, have no true religion, whatever profession they may make, and how high soever their religious affections may be. God has abundantly manifested in his word, that this is what he has a peculiar respect to in his saints, and that nothing is acceptable to him without it ; as it is written—‘The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.’—‘Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly.’—‘Whosoever shall humble himself as a little child; the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.’

“It is true, that many hypocrites make great pretences to humility, as well as other graces ; and very often there is nothing whatsoever which they make a higher profession of. They endeavour to make a great shew of humility in speech and behaviour ; but they commonly make bungling work of it, though glorious work in their own eyes. They can-

not find out what a humble speech and behaviour is, or how to speak and act, so that there may indeed be a savour of Christian humility in what they say and do: that sweet humble air and mein is beyond their art, being not led by the spirit, or naturally guided to a behaviour becoming holy humility, by a lowly spirit within them. And therefore they have no other way, many of them, but only to be much in declaring that they are humble, and telling how they were humbled to the dust at such times, and abounding in these and such like expressions about themselves: 'I am the least of all saints. I am a poor vile creature—I am not worthy of the least mercy! Oh, I have a dreadful wicked heart!' &c. Such expressions are very often used, not with a heart that is broken, not with spiritual mourning, but with a light air, with smiles in the countenance, or with a pharisaical affectation: and we must believe that they are thus humble, and see themselves so vile, upon the credit of their say so; for there is nothing appears in them of any savour of humility, in the manner of their deportment and deeds that they do.

"There are many that are full of expressions of their own vileness, who yet expect to be looked upon as bright saints by others, as their due; and it is dangerous for any, so much as to hint the contrary, or to carry it towards them any otherwise, than as if we looked upon them as some of the chief of

christians. There are many that are much in crying out of their wicked hearts, and their great short-comings, and unprofitableness, and speaking as though they looked on themselves as the meanest of the saints; who yet, if a minister should seriously tell them the same things in private, and should signify, that he feared they were very low and weak christians, and thought they had reason solemnly to consider of their great barrenness and unprofitableness, and falling so much short of many others, it would be more than they could digest; they would think themselves highly injured; and there would be a danger of a rooted prejudice in them against such a minister.

“Some who think themselves quite emptied of themselves, and are confident that they are abased in the dust, are as full as they can hold with the glory of their own humility, and lifted up to heaven with an high opinion of their own abasement. Their humility is a swelling, self-conceited, confident, showy, noisy, assuming humility. For persons to be truly emptied of themselves, and to be poor in spirit, and broken in heart, is quite another thing, and has other effects, than many imagine: And it is astonishing how many are greatly deceived about themselves as to this matter; imagining themselves most humble, when they are most proud, and their behaviour is really the most haughty.

“The deceitfulness of the heart of man ap-

pears in no one thing so much as in that of spiritual pride and self-righteousness. Many Anchorites and Recluses have abandoned the wealth, and pleasures, and common enjoyments of the world, who were far from renouncing their own dignity and righteousness; they only sold one lust to feed another, and so were never the better, but their latter end was worse than their beginning; they turned out one black devil, to let in seven white ones, that were worse than the first, though of a fairer countenance. It is inexpressible and almost inconceivable, how strong a self-righteous, self-exalting disposition is naturally in man: and what he will do and suffer to feed and gratify it; and what lengths have been gone in a seeming self-denial in other respects, by Pharisees among the Jews, and by Papists, many sects of heretics, and enthusiasts among professing christians; and by many Mahometans; and by Pythagorean philosophers, and others, among the heathen; and all to do sacrifice to this Moloch of spiritual pride, or self-righteousness; and that they might have something wherein to exalt themselves before God, and above their fellow creatures.

“But though spiritual pride be so subtle and secret an iniquity, and commonly appears under a pretext of great humility; yet there are two things by which it may (perhaps universally and surely) be discovered and distinguished.

“*First.* He that is under the prevalence of

this distemper, is apt to think highly of his attainments in religion, in comparing himself with others. It is natural for him to fall into that thought of himself, that he is an eminent saint, that he is very high amongst the saints, and that he has distinguishingly good and great experiences. Hence such are apt to put themselves forward among God's people, and as it were to take a high seat among them, as if there was no doubt of it but it belonged to them. They are forward to take upon them the place and business of the chief; to guide, teach, direct, and manage; being (like the Pharisees) 'confident that they are guides to the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, instructors of the foolish, teachers of babes.' It is natural for them to take it for granted, that it belongs to them to do the part of dictators and masters in matters of religion; and they are apt to expect that others should regard them as such. But he whose heart is under the power of christian humility, is of a contrary disposition. He is apt to think his attainments in religion to be comparatively little, and to esteem himself low among the saints. Humility, or lowliness of mind, disposes persons to think others better than themselves, as the apostle directs; 'In lowliness of mind, let each esteem others better than themselves.' It is not natural to them to take it upon them to do the part of teachers; but on the contrary, they are disposed to think that others are fitter for it than they; as it



was with Moses and Jeremiah. And when they do speak, it is not natural to them to speak with a bold, masterly air : And they are not apt to assume authority, and to take upon them to be chief managers and masters.

“ There are some persons experiences that naturally work that way, to make them think highly of their experiences ; and they do often themselves speak of their experiences as very great and extraordinary ; they freely speak of the great things they have met with, &c. But if by great things which they have experienced, they mean comparatively great spiritual experiences, or great compared with others experiences, or beyond what is ordinary, it is the same thing as for a person to say, I am an eminent saint, and have more grace than ordinary : for to have great spiritual experiences is the same thing as to have great grace. The persons that talk thus about their experiences, when they give an account of them, expect that others should admire them. Indeed they do not call it boasting to talk after this manner about their experiences, nor do they look upon it as any sign of pride ; because they say, ‘ they know that it was not they that did it, it was free grace, they are the great things God has done for them.’ But so it was with the Pharisee that Christ tells us of. He in words gave God the glory of making him to differ from other men ; ‘ God, I thank thee, (says he,) that I am not as other men.’ Their verbally ascribing it to the

grace of God, that they are holier than other saints, does not hinder their forwardness to think so highly of their holiness, being a sure evidence of the pride and vanity of their minds. If they were under the influence of an humble spirit, their attainments in religion would not be so apt to shine in their own eyes, nor would they be so much in admiring their own beauty. The christians that are really the most eminent saints, and therefore have the most excellent experiences, and are the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, humble themselves as a little child.—There are some persons that go by the name of high professors, and some will own themselves to be high professors; but eminently humble saints, that will shine brightest in heaven, are not apt to profess high. I do not believe there is an eminent saint in the world that is a high professor.

“A true saint may know that he has true grace: and the more grace there is, the more easily is it known. But yet it does not follow, that an eminent saint is easily sensible that he is an eminent saint. I will not deny that it is possible, that he that has much grace, and is an eminent saint, may know it. But he will not be apt to know it; it will not be a thing obvious to him: that he is better than others, and has higher experiences and attainments, is not a foremost thought; nor is it that which from time to time, readily offers itself; it is a thing that is not in his way, but

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lies far out of sight ; nor will it seem at all natural to him to act upon such a supposition. And this may be laid down as an infallible thing, ‘ That the person who is apt to think that he, as compared with others, is a very eminent saint, much distinguished in christian experience, in whom this is a first thought, that rises of itself, and naturally offers itself ; he is certainly mistaken ; he is no eminent saint, but under the great prevailings of a proud and self-righteous spirit.’ And if this be habitual with the man, and is statedly the prevailing temper of his mind, he is no saint at all ; he has not the least degree of any true christian experience, so surely as the word of God is true.—And that sort of experiences that appears to be of that tendency, and is found from time to time to elevate the subject of them with a great conceit of those experiences, is certainly vain and delusive. Those supposed discoveries that naturally blow up the person with an admiration of the eminency of his discoveries, and fill him with conceit, that now he has seen, and knows more than most other christians, have nothing of the nature of true spiritual light in them.

“ The nature of many high and religious affections, and great discoveries (as they are called) in many persons that I have been acquainted with, is to hide and cover over the corruption of their hearts ; a sure and certain evidence that their discoveries (as they call them) are darkness and not light. It is dark-

ness that hides men's pollution and deformity; but light let into the heart discovers it, searches it out in its secret corners and makes it plainly to appear. And whatever exercises of corruption at any time arise, grace will exceedingly magnify the view of them, and render their appearance far more heinous and horrible.

*“Secondly.* Another thing that is an infallible sign of spiritual pride, is persons being apt to think highly of their humility. False experiences are commonly attended with a counterfeit humility. And it is the very nature of a counterfeit humility, to be highly conceited of itself. False and high affections generally tend to make persons think their humility is great, and they take much notice of their great attainments in this respect, and admire them. But eminently gracious affections, are evermore of a contrary tendency, and have universally a contrary effect in those that have them. An eminent saint is not apt to think himself eminent in any thing; all his graces and experiences are ready to appear to him to be comparatively small; but especially his humility. There is nothing that appertains to christian experience, and true piety, that is so much out of his sight as his humility. He is a thousand times more quick-sighted to discern his pride than his humility; he hardly discerns his humility. On the contrary, the deluded hypocrite, that is under the power of spiritual pride, is so

blind to nothing as his pride ; and so quick-sighted to nothing, as the shews of humility that are in him.

“ From the disposition there is in hypocrites to think highly of their humility, it comes to pass that counterfeit humility is forward to put itself forth to view. Those that have it, are apt to be much in speaking of their humiliations, and to set them forth in high terms, and to make a great outward shew of humility, in affected looks, gestures, or manner of speech, or some affected singularity. But it is contrariwise with true humility ; they that have it, are not apt to display their eloquence in setting of it forth, or to speak of the degree of their absement in strong terms. It does not affect to shew itself in any way whatever. Nor is true humility a noisy thing ; it is not loud and boisterous.

“ A truly humble person, is poor in spirit ; and he naturally behaves himself in many respects as a poor man. He is patient with hard fare ; he expects no other than to be despised, and takes it patiently ; he does not take it heinously that he is overlooked and but little regarded ; he is prepared to be in low places ; he takes reproofs quietly, and has his spirit subdued to hard things. Thus it is with the humble christian ; and it is in vain for any to pretend that they are humble, and as little children before God, when they are haughty and assuming in their behaviour.

“ Thus (says Mr. Edwards) I have en-

deavoured to describe the heart and behaviour of one that is governed by a truly gracious humility, as agreeably to the scriptures as I am able ; and it is out of such a heart as this, that all truly holy affections do flow."

VI. *Another distinguishing characteristic of those who are in a truly renewed and gracious state, is a change of nature.*

To be renewed, properly means to be changed or converted ; and "Conversion, (says Mr. Edwards,) if we may give any credit to the scripture, is a great and universal change of the man, turning him from sin to God. A man may be restrained from sin, before he is converted ; but when he is converted, he is not only restrained from sin, but his very heart and nature is turned from it unto holiness : so that thenceforward he becomes a holy person, and an enemy to sin. If, therefore, after a person's high affections, at his supposed first conversion, it comes to that in a little time, that there is no very sensible, or remarkable alteration in him, as to those bad qualities, and evil habits, which before were visible in him ; and he is ordinarily under the prevalence of the same kind of dispositions that he used to be, and the same things seem to belong to his character ; it is greater evidence against him, than the brightest story of experiences that ever was told is for him. For, in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision, nor uncircumcision, neither high profession nor low

profession, neither a plain story, nor a broken one, avails any thing; but a new creature.\*

“There is a sort of high affections that some have from time to time, that leave them without any manner of appearance of an abiding effect. They go off suddenly; so that from the very height of their emotion, and seeming rapture, they pass at once to be quite dead, and void of all sense and activity. But it surely is not wont to be thus with truly gracious affections; they leave a sweet savour and relish of divine things on the heart, and a stronger bent of soul towards God and holiness.”

VII. *Another thing which distinguishes those that are in a truly renewed and gracious state, is a loving, meek, quiet, forgiving and merciful spirit.*

“True christians are as it were clothed with the meek, quiet, and loving temper of Christ; for they have put on Christ: and the branch is of the same nature with the stock and root, has the same sap, and bears the same sort of fruit. It would be strange if

\* “The change that is wrought in conversion, is an universal change; grace changes a man with respect to what ever is sinful in him; the old man is put off, and the new man put on; old things are passed away, and all things are become new; all sin is mortified, constitutional sins, as well as others. Therefore, if there be no great and remarkable abiding change in persons, that think they have experienced a work of conversion, vain are all their imaginations and pretences, however they have been affected.”

christians should not be of the same temper and spirit that Christ was of; when they are his flesh and his bone, yea, are one spirit, and Christ lives in them.

“That all true saints are of a loving, benevolent, and beneficent temper, the scripture is very plain and abundant. Without it the apostle tells us, though we should speak with the tongues of men and angels, we are as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal: and that though we have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, yet without this spirit we are nothing. This spirit may, by way of eminency, be called the christian spirit; and may be looked upon as the true, and distinguishing disposition of the hearts of christians, as christians.—There is no one virtue or disposition of the mind, that is so often, and so expressly insisted on in the New-Testament as this. The scripture knows of no such true christians, as are of sordid, selfish, cross and contentious spirit. Nothing can be invented that is a greater absurdity, than a morose, hard, close, high spirited, spiteful, true christian.”

*VIII. Another thing which distinguishes those that are in a truly renewed and gracious state, is a tender conscientious spirit.*

“False affections, however persons may seem to be melted by them while they are new, yet have a tendency in the end to harden the heart. A disposition to some kind of desires may be established; such as imply self-



seeking, self-exaltation, and opposition to others ; but false affections, with the delusion that attends them, finally tend to stupify the mind, and shut it up against those affections wherein tenderness of heart consists: and the effect of them at last is, that persons in the settled frame of their minds, become more careless of the manner and tendency of their behaviour, less quick-sighted to discern what is sinful, and less afraid of the appearance of evil, than they were while under legal awakenings and fears of hell. Now they have been the subjects of such and such impressions and affections, and have a high opinion of themselves, and look on their state to be safe ; they can be much more easy than before, in living in the neglect of duties that are troublesome and inconvenient ; and are much more slow and partial in complying with difficult commands ; and are in no measure so alarmed at the appearance of their own defects and transgressions ; and can more easily yield to temptations.—Formerly it may be, under legal convictions, they took much pains in religion, and denied themselves in many things : but now they think themselves out of danger of hell, they very much put off the burden of the cross, and save themselves the trouble of difficult duties, and indulge themselves more in ease.

“Such persons as these, instead of embracing Christ as their Saviour from sin, they trust in

him as the saviour of their sins.\* They make Christ the minister of sin, and great officer and vicegerent of the devil, to strengthen his interest, and make him above all things in the world strong against Jehovah; so that they may sin against him with good courage, and without any fear.—They trust in Christ to preserve to them the quiet enjoyment of their sins, and to be their shield to defend them from God's displeasure; while they come close to him, even to his bosom, the place of his children, to fight against him, with their mortal weapons, hid under their skirts†—However, some of these, at the same time, make a great profession of love to God, and assurance of his favour, and great joy in tasting the sweetness of his love.

“Gracious affections are of a quite contrary tendency. For holy love and hope are principles that are vastly more efficacious upon the heart, to make it tender, and to fill it with

\* “Many a man, it may be, may say, I have nothing in myself, and all is in Christ; and so falls asleep. Hands off! and touch not this ark, lest the Lord slay thee: a Christ made of cloth would serve your turn as well” *Shepard.*

† Mr. Shepard speaking of certain hypocrites, who pretend to rely on Christ by faith, says—“This hardens and blinds them, and makes them secure, and their faith is sermon-proof, nothing stirs them.—And were it not for their faith they would despair, but this keeps them up. And now they think if they have any trouble of mind, the devil troubles them—so they would sin under the shadow of Christ, because the shadow is good and sweet. Fie upon that faith, that serves only to keep a man from being tormented before his time!”

a dread of sin, or whatever might displease and offend God, than a slavish fear of hell. Yea, the most confident and assured hope, that is truly gracious, has this tendency. The banishing of a servile fear, by a holy assurance, is attended with a proportionable increase of reverential or filial fear; the diminishing of the fear of hell, with an increase of the fear of sin.

“One reason why gracious affections are attended with this tender conscientious spirit spoken of, is, that true grace tends to promote convictions of conscience. It does not stupify a man’s conscience; but makes it more sensible, and more easy to discern the sinfulness of that which is sinful. And it makes the heart tender with respect to sin; like David’s heart, that smote him, when he had cut off Saul’s skirt. The heart of a true penitent is like a burnt child that dreads the fire. Whereas on the contrary, he that has a counterfeit repentance, and false comforts and joys, is like iron that has been suddenly heated and quenched; it becomes much harder than before. A false conversion puts an end to convictions of conscience; and so either takes away, or much diminishes that conscientiousness, which was manifested under a work of the law.”

*IX. Another thing which distinguishes those that are in a truly renewed and gracious state, from those whose affections are false, is the con-*

*stency and uniformity of their conduct and affections.*

“It is with hypocrites, as it was with Ephraim of old, at a time when God greatly complains of their hypocrisy ; ‘Ephraim is a cake not turned,’ half roasted and half raw : there is commonly no manner of uniformity in their affections.

“There is often in hypocrites, not only an essential deficiency as to the various kinds of religious affections, but there is also, in many of them, a strange partiality and disproportion, in the same affections with regard to different objects.—Thus as to the affection of love, some make high pretences, and a great show of love to God and Christ, and it may be have been greatly affected with what they have heard or thought concerning them : but they have not a spirit of love and benevolence towards men, but are disposed to contention, envy, revenge, and evil speaking ; and will, it may be, suffer an old grudge to rest in their bosoms towards a neighbour, for seven years together ; living in real ill-will and bitterness of spirit towards him : and it may be, in their dealings with their neighbours, they are not very strict and conscientious in observing the rule of ‘doing to others, as they would that they should do to them.’ And, on the other hand, there are others, that appear as if they had a great deal of benevolence to men, are very good natured and generous in their way, but have no love to God.

“ And as to love men, there are some that have flowing affections to some ; but their love is far from being of so extensive and universal a nature, as a truly christian love is. They are full of dear affections to some, and full of bitterness to others. They are knit to their own party; them that approve of them, love them and admire them ; but are fierce against those that oppose and dislike them. Some show a great affection to their neighbours, and pretend to be ravished with the company of the children of God abroad ; and at the same time are uncomfortable and churlish towards their wives and other near relations at home. —And as there is a monstrous disproportion in the love of some, in its exercises towards different persons, so there is in their seeming exercises of love towards the same persons. Some men show a love to others as to their outward man, by giving them of their worldly substance ; but have no love to, or concern for the souls of men. Others pretend a great love to men’s souls, that are not compassionate and charitable towards their bodies. The making a great show of love, pity, and distress for souls, costs them nothing ; but in order to show mercy to men’s bodies, they must part with money out of their pockets. But a true christian love extends both to the souls and bodies of men ; and herein is like the love and compassion of Jesus Christ.

“ As there is a much greater disproportion in the exercises of false affections than of

true, as to different objects, so there is also as to different times. For although true christians are not always alike ; yet there is no wise that instability and inconstancy in the hearts of those who are true virgins, 'that follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth,' which there is in false-hearted professors. The righteous man is truly said to be one whose heart is fixed, trusting in God ; and to have his heart established with grace, and to hold on his way. If, therefore, persons are religious only by fits and starts ; if they now and then seem to be raised up to the clouds in their affections, and then suddenly fall down again, and become careless and carnal, and this is their manner of carrying on religion ; if they appear greatly moved, and mightily engaged in religion, only in extraordinary seasons, in the time of a remarkable out-pouring of the Spirit, or some uncommon dispensation of providence, or when they suppose they are newly converted, or have lately had what they call a great discovery ; but quickly return to such a frame, that their hearts are chiefly upon other things, and the prevailing bent of their hearts and stream of their affections, is ordinarily towards the things of this world ; when they are like the children of Israel in the wilderness, who had their affections highly raised by what God had done for them at the Red Sea, and sang his praise, and soon fell a lusting after the flesh-pots of Egypt ; but then again when they came to mount Sina, and saw the great mani-

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festations God made of himself there, seemed to be greatly engaged again, and mightily forward to enter into covenant with God, saying, 'All that the Lord hath spoken will we do, and be obedient,' but then quickly made them a golden calf; I say, when it is thus with persons, it is a sign of the unsoundness of their affections.\* They are like the waters in the time of a shower of rain, which, during the shower, and a little after, run like a brook, and flow abundantly; but are presently quite dry: and when another shower comes, then they flow again. Whereas a true saint is like a stream from a living spring, which though it may be greatly increased by a shower of rain, and diminished in a time of drought, yet constantly runs: Hypocrites many times are like comets, that appear for a while with a mighty blaze; but are very unsteady and irregular in their motion (and are therefore in *Jude* called wandering stars) and their blaze soon disappears, and they appear but once in a great while. But the true saints are like the

\* "There is (says Preston) a certain love, by fits, which God accepts not; when men come and offer to God great promises, like the waves of the sea, as big as mountains: Oh, they think they will do much for God! But their minds change; and they become as those high waves, which at last fall level with the other waters. If a man should proffer thee great kindnesses; and thou shouldst afterwards come to him to make use of him, and he should look strangely upon thee, as if he were never acquainted with thee; how wouldst thou esteem of such love? If we are now on, now off, in our love, God will not esteem of such love."

fixed stars, which, though they rise and set, and are often clouded, yet are steadfast in their orb, and may truly be said to shine with a constant light. Hypocritical affections are like a violent motion; like that of the air that is moved with winds: (*Jude* xii.) but gracious affections are more a natural motion; like the stream of a river, which, though it has many turns hither and thither, and may meet with obstacles, and run more freely and swiftly in some places than others; yet in general, with a steady and constant course, tends the same way, until it gets to the ocean.

“And as there is a strange unevenness and disproportion in false affections, at different times; so there often is in different places. Some are greatly affected from time to time, when in company; but have nothing that bears any manner of proportion to it, in secret, when alone, and separated from all the world.\* A true christian doubtless delights in religious fellowship, and christian conversation, and finds much to affect his heart in it; but he also delights at times to retire from all mankind, to converse with God in solitary places. So it wrought in Isaac; *Gen.* xxiv. 63. And which is much more, so it wrought in Jesus

\* “The Lord (says Shepard) is neglected secretly, yet honoured openly; because there is no wind in their chambers to blow their sails; and therefore there they stand still.” “The hypocrite (says Flavel) is not for the closet, but the synagogue: he must be seen of men. This is the water that turns a Pharisee’s mill.”



**Christ.** How often do we read of his retiring into mountains and solitary places, for holy converse with his Father? So that if persons appear greatly engaged in social religion, and but little in the religion of the closet, and are often affected when with others, and but little moved when they have none but God and Christ to converse with, it looks very darkly upon their religion."

*X. Those who are in a truly renewed and gracious state, do not settle down in a state of ease and indolence in any present attainments of religion, as though they were already sufficiently good and prepared for heaven; but they desire to partake of all the mind of Christ, and continually press towards the mark of the prize of their high calling. On the contrary, false affections rest satisfied in themselves.*

"Many (says Mr. Edwards) in these days have got into a strange antisciptural way, of having all their striving and wrestling over before they are converted; and so having an easy time of it afterwards, to sit down and enjoy their sloth and indolence; as those that now have a supply of their wants, and are become rich and full. Hence there is an end to many persons earnestness in seeking, after they have once obtained that which they call their conversion; or at least, after they have had those high affections, that make them fully confident of it. Before, while they looked upon themselves as in a state of nature, they were engaged in seeking after God and Christ,

and cried earnestly for grace, and strove in the use of means : but now they act as though they thought their work was done ; they live upon their first work, or some high experiences that are past ; and there is an end to their crying, and striving after God and grace.\*

"But doubtless there are some hypocrites, that have only false affections, who will think they are able to stand this trial ; and will readily say, that they desire not to rest satisfied with past attainments, but to be pressing forward, they do desire more, they long after God and Christ, and desire more holiness, and do seek it. But the truth is, their desires are not properly the desires of appetite after holiness, for its own sake, or for the moral excellency and holy sweetness that is in it ; but only for by-ends. They long after clearer discoveries, that they may be better satisfied about the state of their souls ; or because in great discoveries self is gratified, in being made so much of by God, and so exalted above others ;† they long to taste the love of

\* Says Shepard, "There is never a hypocrite living, but closeth with Christ for his own ends ; for he cannot work beyond his principle. Now when men have served their own turns out of another man, away they go, and keep that which they have. An hypocrite's last end is to satisfy himself. And hence men at the first work upon them, are very diligent in the use of means ; but after that, they neglect prayer, sleep out sermons, and are careless, sapless, lifeless."

† "Hypocrites long for discoveries, more for the present comfort of the discovery, and the high manifestation of God's love in it, than for any sanctifying influence of it."

God, (as they call it,) more than to have more love to God. Or, it may be, they have a kind of forced, fancied, or made longings ; because they think they must long for more grace, otherwise it will be a dark sign upon them. But neither a longing after great discoveries, or after great tastes of the love of God, nor longing to be in heaven, are in any measure so distinguishing marks of true saints, as longing after a more holy heart, and living a more holy life."

XI. *The last thing I shall notice, as a distinguishing sign of a truly renewed and gracious state, is an entire constant adherence to such a practice and way of life, as is agreeable to the rules and precepts of the christian religion.*

Mr. Stoddard, in his Way to know sincerity and hypocrisy, says—"He that pretends to godliness, and turns aside to crooked ways, is an hypocrite: for those that are really godly, do live in a way of obedience." He adds; "If a man lives in one evil way, he is not subject to God's authority ; but lives in rebellion : and that will take off all his pleas, and at once cut off all his pretences ; and he will be condemned in the day of judgment.—One way of sin is exception enough against a man's salvation: though the sin that he lives in be but small. A small shot may kill a man, as well as a cannon bullet : a small leak may sink a ship. If a man lives in small sins, that shows he has no love to God, no sincere care to

please and honour God.—Little sins are of a damning nature, as well as great: if they do not deserve so much punishment as greater, yet they do deserve damnation. There is a contempt of God in all sins.\*

“It is of importance, (says president Edwards,) that it should be observed, that in order to a man’s being truly said to be universally obedient, his obedience must not only consist in negatives, or in universally avoiding wicked practices; but he must also be universal in the positives of religion. Sins of omission are as much breaches of God’s commands, as sins of commission. Christ, in Matth. xxv. represents those on the left hand

\* “It is necessary (says Edwards) that men should be universally obedient. ‘He that is born of God, sinneth not.’ ‘Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.’ If one member only be corrupt, and we do not cut it off, it will carry the whole body to hell. Saul was commanded to slay all God’s enemies, the Amalekites; and he slew all but Agag, and the saving him alive proved his ruin. Caleb and Joshua entered into God’s promised rest, because they wholly followed the Lord. Naaman’s hypocrisy appeared in that, however he seemed to be greatly affected with gratitude to God for healing his leprosy, and engaged to serve him, yet in one thing he desired to be excused. And Herod, though he feared John, and observed him, and heard him gladly, and did many things; yet was condemned, in that in one thing, he would not hearken to him, even in parting with his beloved Herodias. So that it is necessary that men should part with their dearest iniquities, which are as their right hand and right eye,—sins that most easily beset them, and which they are most exposed to by their natural inclinations, evil customs, or particular circumstances, as well as others.”

as being condemned and cursed to everlasting fire, for sins of omission,—‘I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat,’ &c. A man therefore cannot be said to be universally obedient, and of a christian conversation, only because he is no thief, oppressor, nor fraudulent person, &c. &c. but in order to this, it is necessary that he should also be humble, meek, forgiving, peaceable, condescending, benevolent and merciful. Without such things as these, he does not obey the laws of Christ, and laws that he and his apostles did abundantly insist on, as of the greatest importance and necessary.

“Christ’s peculiar people, not only do good works, but are zealous of good works. True christians do the work of christians; which is every where in the New-Testament compared to those exercises, wherein men are wont to exert their strength with the greatest earnestness, as running, wrestling, fighting. For only those who ‘fight the good fight of faith,’ ever ‘lay hold on eternal life.’ Those who ‘fight as they that beat the air,’ never win the crown of victory. The kingdom of heaven is not to be taken but by violence. Without earnestness there is no getting along, in that narrow way that leads to life; and so no arriving at that state of glorious life and happiness to which it leads. Without earnest labour, there is no ascending the steep and high hill of Zion; and so no arriving at the heavenly city on the top of it. Without a

constant laboriousness, there is no stemming the swift stream in which we swim, so as ever to come to that fountain of water of life that is at the head of it. There is need of our 'putting on the whole armour of God, and doing all to stand,' in order to our avoiding a total overthrow, and being utterly destroyed by the 'fiery darts of the devil.' Slothfulness in the service of God, in his professed servants, is as damning as open rebellion; for the slothful servant is declared to be a wicked servant, and he shall be cast into outer darkness, among God's open enemies. And all those who follow that cloud of witnesses that are gone before to heaven, 'do lay aside every weight, and the sin that easily besets them, and do run with patience the race that is set before them.'

"Furthermore, true christians persevere in this way of universal obedience, and diligent and earnest service of God, through all the various kinds of trials they meet with during their pilgrimage in life. And this perseverance in obedience, and being steadfast in a holy walk in trials, is chiefly insisted on in the scripture, as a special note of the truth of grace. By trials here, is meant those things that occur, and that a professor meets with in his course, that do especially render his continuance in his duty, and faithfulness to God, difficult to nature. These things are from time to time called in scripture by the name of trials, or temptations (which are words of the

same signification.) These are of various kinds : there are many things that make it hard for persons to continue in the way of their duty, by their being of an alluring nature, and their having a tendency to entice them to sin ; or by their tendency to take off restraints, and stir up their passions. Other things are trials of the soundness and steadfastness of professors, by their tendency to make their duty appear terrible unto them, and so to affright and drive them from it ; such as the sufferings which their duty will expose them to ; pain, ill-will, contempt, and reproach, or loss of outward possessions and comforts. If persons after they have made a profession of religion, live any considerable time in this world, which is so full of changes, and so full of evil, it cannot be otherwise, than that they should meet with many trials of their sincerity and steadfastness in this way, shewing to themselves, and oftentimes to the world, the real state of their hearts. For the truest trial of the power of grace, is in such particular cases as touch us nearest. When Christ came home to the young man in the gospel, he lost a disciple of him."

"Some persons (says Stoddard) delight in iniquity, and take pleasure in intemperate practices ; but there be others, that do not delight in sin ; when they can handsomely avoid it, they do not chuse it ; except they be under some great necessity, they will not do it. They are afraid to sin ; they think it danger-

ous, and have some care to avoid it: but sometimes they force themselves to sin: they are reduced to difficulties, and cannot tell how well to avoid it; it is a dangerous thing not to do it. If Naaman do not bow himself in the house of Rimmon, the King will be in a rage with him, take away his office, it may be take away his life, and so he complies.—So Jeroboam forced himself to set up the calves at Dan and Bethel: he thought that if the people went up to Jerusalem to worship, they would return to Rehoboam, and kill him; therefore he must think of some expedient to deliver himself in this strait. He was driven by appearing necessity to take this wicked course.—So Achan and Gehazi had singular opportunities to get an estate; if they live twenty years they are not like to have such an advantage: and they force themselves to borrow a point, and break the law of God. If a man be willing to serve God in ordinary cases, but excuse himself when there be great difficulties, he is not godly. It is a small matter to serve God, when men have no temptation: but Lot was holy in Sodom, Noah was righteous in the world. Temptations try men, but they do not force men to sin: and they are blessed that do endure temptation.”

“The reason why gracious affections have their exercise and fruit in holy practice, appears from this, that they arise from an inward principle of divine life implanted in the soul,



from Christ living in the heart. This is sufficient to show us why true grace should have such activity, power, and efficacy. Christ is not in the heart of a saint, as a dead Saviour, that does nothing; but as one that is *alive* from the dead; and every true saint, is made to know and experience the power of his resurrection. Hence saying affections, though oftentimes they do not make so great a show and noise as others," (as neither did the Saviour when in the world;) "yet they have in them a secret solidity, life, and strength, gaining a full and steadfast determination of the will for God and holiness; Whereas false discoveries and affections do not go deep enough, to reach and govern the spring of men's actions and practice. The seed in stony ground had not deepness of earth, and the root did not go deep enough to bring forth fruit. But gracious affections go to the very bottom of the heart, and take hold of the very inmost springs of life and activity. And herein appears the power of true godliness, viz. in its being effectual in practice; in its conquering the will and the corruptions of men, and carrying them on in the way of holiness, through all temptation, difficulty and opposition.

"Another reason why gracious affections have their exercise and effect in holy practice, appears from this, that they are founded on the transcendently excellent and amiable nature of divine things, as they are in them-

selves, and not any conceived relation they bear to self, or self-interest. What makes men partial in religion is, that they seek themselves, and not God, in their religion, and close with religion, not for its own excellent nature, but only to serve a turn. He that closes with religion only to serve a turn, will close with no more of it than he imagines serves that turn; but he that closes with religion for its own excellent and lovely nature, closes with all that has that nature. Now as holiness is the main thing that excites, draws, and governs all gracious affections, it is no wonder that all such affections tend to holiness. That which men love, they are necessarily inclined to do; and a love to holiness for holiness' sake, will cause persons to live holy.

“ Another reason also why holy practice is evermore found in truly gracious persons, appears from this, that there is a change of nature. Without a change of nature, men's practice will not be fully changed. Until the tree be made good, the fruit will not be good. Nature is a more powerful principle of action, than any thing that opposes it: though it may be violently restrained for a while, it will finally overcome that which restrains it: it is like the stream of a river, it may be stopped a while with a dam, but if nothing be done to dry the fountain, it will not be stopped always; it will have a course, either in its old channel, or a new one. Nature is a thing

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more constant and permanent than any of those things that are the foundation of carnal men's reformation and righteousness. When a natural man denies his sin, and lives a strict, religious life, and seems earnest in religion, it is not natural, it is all a force against nature; as when a stone is violently thrown upwards; but that force will be gradually spent; yet nature will remain in its full strength, and so prevails again, and the stone returns downwards. As long as corrupt nature is not mortified, but the principle left whole in a man, it is a vain thing to expect that it should not govern.\* But if the

\* There is such a thing as having the corruption of nature only turned into a new channel, instead of its being mortified or subdued. This seems to have been the case with the proselyted Gentiles in our Saviour's time. "It was moreover, the case of the Jews of that generation that Christ speaks of, Matth. xii. 3, 4, who being awakened by John the Baptist's preaching, and brought to a reformation of their former licentious courses, whereby the unclean spirit was as it were turned out; yet being empty of God and of grace, became full of themselves, and were exalted in an exceeding high opinion of their own righteousness and eminent holiness; so changing the sins of Publicans and Harlots, for those of the Pharisees; and in the issue, had seven devils worse than the first." It is to be feared, it is just so with many tens of thousands in the present day; who being awakened from a careless state, and having some tastes of divine things, think they are converted, and look upon themselves as chief saints; and so become of a self-righteous and spiritual proud temper of mind. "When it is thus with men, (says Mr. Edwards,) however far they may seem to be removed from their former evil practices, this alone is enough to condemn them, and may render their last state far worse than the first."

old nature be indeed mortified, and a new and heavenly nature infused, then may it well be expected that men will walk in newness of life. For the tendency of grace in the heart to holy practice, is very direct, and the connection most natural, close, and necessary. It is the very nature or notion of grace, that it is a principle of holy action or practice.

As a truly holy christian practice is evermore found in true saints, according as they have opportunity and trial, so it is found in them only ; none but true christians do live such an obedient life, and are so universally devoted to their duty, as has been explained. All unsanctified men are workers of iniquity : they will not endure the trials God is wont to bring on the professors of religion, but will turn aside to their crooked ways : they will not be thoroughly faithful to Christ in their practice, and follow him whithersoever he goes. Whatever lengths they may go in religion in some instances, and though they may appear exceedingly strict, and mightily engaged in the service of God for a season ; yet they are servants to sin ; the chains of their old task-master are not broken ; and therefore to these masters they will bow down again."

"No hypocrite (says Shepard) though he closeth with Christ, and for a time grow up in the knowledge of, and communion with Christ, but he hath hidden iniquities and thorns, that overgrow his growings, and choke all at last, and in the conclusion he meditates

a league between Christ and his sins, and seeks to reconcile them together.”—“ Their faith is of such a kind, that they have never yet been thoroughly rent from sin. And here is the great wound of the most cunning hypocrites living—Let a man be cast down as low as hell with sorrow, and lie under chains, quaking, in apprehension of terror to come: let a man then be raised up to heaven in joy, not able to live; let a man reform and shine like an earthly angel; yet if not rent from sin, that either you did not see, or if so, you have never followed the Lord to remove it, but proud, dogged, worldly, sluggish still, false in your dealings, cunning in your tradings, devils in your families, images in your churches, you are objects of pity now, and shall be of terror at the great day. For where sin remains in power, it will bring faith, and Christ, and joy into bondage and service of itself.”

—“ No unregenerate man, though he go ever so far, let him do ever so much, but he lives in some one sin or other, secret or open, little or great. Judas went far, but he was covetous; Herod went far, but he loved his Herodias. Read through all the scripture; never any hypocrites but they had this brand, ‘you workers of iniquity.’—An unsanctified man may hide his sin, and may in many things, and for a season, refrain from sin; but he will not be brought finally to renounce his sin, and give it a bill of divorce: sin is too dear to him, for him to be willing for that: as it is said in Job,

‘wickedness is sweet in his mouth : and therefore he hides it under his tongue ; he spares it, and forsakes it not ; but keeps it still within his mouth.’

“ A carnal man (says Preston) may hit upon some good duty that God commands, and refrain from some sin that God forbids ; but to go through, he cannot ; to take up reproach and disgrace, to lose his credit, to forsake his friends, to lose honour, and riches, and pleasures ; this he will not do, until he be humbled.”—“ They will do some things, (says Mr. Edwards,) but not all things : and they will forego some things, but not all things. And therefore our Saviour saith, ‘ He that will not forsake all for my sake, is not worthy of me.’ And herein chiefly consists the straitness of the gate, and the narrowness of the way that leads to life : upon the account of which, carnal men will not go in thereat, viz. that it is a way of utterly denying and finally renouncing all ungodliness, and so a way of self-denial or self-renunciation.” He continues :

“ Many natural men, under the means that are used with them, and God’s strivings with them, to bring them to forsake their sins, do by their sins as Pharaoh did by his pride and covetousness, which he gratified by keeping the children of Israel in bondage, when God strove with him to bring him to let the people go. When God’s hand pressed Pharaoh sore, and he was exercised with fears of God’s future wrath, he entertained some thoughts of

letting the people go, and promised he would do it ; but from time to time he broke his promises, when he saw there was respite. When God filled Egypt with thunder and lightning, and the fire ran along the ground, then Pharaoh is brought to confess his sin with seeming humility, and to have a great resolution to let the people go : ‘ And Pharaoh sent, and called for Moses and Aaron, and said unto them, I have sinned this time : the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked : intreat the Lord that there be no more mighty thunderings and hail ; and I will let you go, and ye shall stay no longer.’ So sinners are sometimes by thunder and lightnings, and great terrors of the law, brought to a seeming work of humiliation, and to appearance to part with their sins ; but are no more thoroughly brought to a disposition to dismiss them, than Pharaoh was to let the people go. Pharaoh in the struggle that was between his conscience and his covetousness, was for contriving that God might be served, and he have his covetousness gratified by the slavery of the people too. Moses insisted that Israel’s God should be served and sacrificed unto : Pharaoh was willing to consent to that ; but would have it done without his parting with the people ; ‘ Go sacrifice to your God in the land,’ says he. So, many sinners are for contriving to serve God, and enjoy their sins too. Moses objected against complying with Pharaoh’s proposal, that serving God, and yet continuing in Egypt

under their task-masters; did not agree together, and were inconsistent one with the other; (there is no serving God, and continuing slaves to such enemies of God at the same time.) After this Pharaoh consented to let the people go, provided they would not go far away: he was not willing to part with them finally, and therefore would have them within reach. So do many hypocrites with respect to their sins. Afterwards Pharaoh consented to let the men go, if they would leave the women and children. And then after that, when God's hand was yet harder upon him, he consented that they should go even women and children, as well as men, provided they would leave their cattle behind: but he was not willing to let them go, and all that they had. So it oftentimes is with sinners; they are willing to part with some of their sins, but not all; they are brought to part with the more gross acts of sin, but not to part with their sins, in lesser indulgences of them. Whereas we must part with all our sins, little and great; and all that belongs to them, men, women, children, and cattle; they must all be let go, with 'their young, and their old, with their sons, and their daughters, with their flocks, and with their herds, there must not be an hoof left behind;' as Moses told Pharaoh, with respect to the children of Israel. At last, when it came to extremity, Pharaoh consented to let the people all go, and all that they had; but he was not steadfastly of that mind; he soon repented, and pursued after



them again: and the reason was, that those lusts of pride and covetousness, that were gratified by Pharaoh's dominion over the people, and the gains of their service, were never really mortified in him, but only violently restrained. And thus, he being guilty of backsliding, after his seeming compliance with God's commands, was destroyed without remedy. Thus there may be a forced parting with ways of disobedience to the commands of God, that may seem to be universal, as to what appears, for a little season; but because it is a mere force, without the mortification of the inward principle of sin, they will not persevere in it; but will return as the dog to his vomit; and so bring on themselves dreadful and remediless destruction. There were many false disciples in Christ's time, that followed him for a while; but none of them followed him to the end; but some on one occasion, and some on another, went back and walked no more with him."

Boston, speaking of rightly receiving Christ, has these words—"They that are driven to Christ by terror, will surely leave him, when that terror is gone. Terrors may break a heart of stone, but the pieces into which it is broken, still continue to be stone: The terrors cannot soften it into an heart of flesh."—"A minister, (says Burder,) who had large opportunities of observing the lives of criminals condemned to death and afterwards reprieved, observed, that although he had known many

whose penitence shewed every mark of sincerity while the stroke of death hung over them, yet that he had never known one, even of these, who on being reprieved, did not return to his former vicious and profligate courses.” —“The primitive Church (says Hannah More) carried their incredulity of the appearances of repentance so far as to require not only years of sorrow for sin, but perseverance in piety, before they would admit offenders to their communion; and as a test of their sincerity, required the uniform practice of those virtues most opposite to their former vices. Were this made the criterion now, we should not so often hear such flaming accounts of converts so exultingly reported, before time has been allowed to try their stability. More especially we should not hear of so many triumphant relations of death-bed converts, in whom the symptoms must frequently be too equivocal to admit the positive decision of human wisdom.”

People without any goodness of heart whatever, under great fears or sufferings, are often brought to yield up to the requirements of the law and consent to the will of God: but their hearts are not in the thing, and their subsequent conduct soon manifests that there has been no effectual change in their minds. It was thus with Pharaoh, under the heavy judgment of slaying all the *first born of Egypt*: the stout hearted Pharaoh was then brought to yield his consent to let Israel go. Fear

only wrought all this in him—he now, indeed, even urged the departure of the children of Israel, for the Egyptians said; *we be all dead men*, we shall all be slain. But Pharaoh's heart was far from uniting in what he did; fear alone produced this effect; and as soon as his fears subsided he pursued after the children of Israel to bring them back.—So again the corrupted Jews, in the time of Jeremiah, when Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem, set all their Hebrew servants free, as enjoined by the law; hoping, no doubt, thereby to interest the Lord in their behalf, and also to encourage these servants, now set free, to fight more vigorously against their enemies, that they might not overcome the place. But as soon as the Chaldee army moved away, (on account of the Egyptian forces that were coming against them,) and their fears were over, they then brought them back into bondage to them again; for which Jeremiah severely reproved them.

“There be three seasons, (says Flavel,) in which the zeal of an hypocrite may be inflamed. *First*, When some imminent danger threatens him; some smart rod of God is shaken over him; O the goodly words they give, the fair promises they make! and yet all the while *they do but flatter him with their lips*; for let that danger pass over, and the heavens clear up again, and he will return to his old course again. *Secondly*, When the times countenance and favour religion, and the wind is in his back, O what zeal will he then have for God!

So in the stoney-ground, the seed sprung up and flourished till the sun of persecution arose, and then it faded away ; for it had no depth of earth, no deep solid inward work or principle of grace to maintain it. *Thirdly*, When self-ends and designs are accommodated and promoted by these things. How fervently will some men pray, preach, and profess, whilst they sensibly feel the incomes and profits of these duties to their flesh ; whilst they are admired and applauded ! These external incentives will put a hypocrite into an hot fit of zeal ; but then, as it is with a man, whose colours are raised by the heat of the fire, and not by the healthfulness of a good constitution, it soon fades and falls again.”—

He adds further: “When a false professor is engaged alone in sufferings, and is singled out from the herd as a deer, to be run down, now it is a thousand to one but he quits religion to save himself : good company will encourage a faint-hearted traveller to jog on a great way ; but if he be forsaken by all, as Paul was, no man to stand by him ; if he be left alone, as Elijah was, what can encourage him to hold out ? But, blessed be God, it is not so with all : the man whose heart is upright with his God, will *keep judgment, and do righteousness at all times.* Whether dangers threaten or no ; whether times favour religion or no ; whether his interest be promoted by it or no, he will be holy still. If his duty become his reproach, yet Moses will not forsake it. If

he lose his company and be left alone, yet Paul will not flinch from his duty."

"From what has been said, it is manifest, that christian practice, or a holy life, is a great and distinguishing sign of true and saving grace. But I will go further, and assert, that it is the chief of all the signs of grace, both as an evidence of the sincerity of professors unto others, and also to their own consciences. And,

"*First*, I shall consider christian practice and an holy life, as a manifestation and sign of the sincerity of a professing christian to others. That this is the chief sign of grace in this respect, is very evident from the word of God. Christ, who knew best how to give us rules to judge concerning such as profess religion, has repeated it and inculcated it, that we should know them by their fruits: 'Ye shall know them by their fruits.' Christ nowhere says, Ye shall know the tree by its leaves or flowers, or ye shall know men by their talk, or ye shall know them by the good story they tell of their experiences, or ye shall know them by the manner and air of their speaking, or by making a very great show by abundance of talk, or by many tears and affectionate expressions, or by the affections ye feel in your hearts towards them; but by their fruits shall ye know them; for the proper evidence of the nature of the tree is its fruit.\*

\* Hunter, in his *Sacred history*, speaking of Ruth the Moabitess, says: "Her religious principle was deliberate,

The apostle James, comparing that way of shewing others our faith and christianity by our practice or works, with other ways of shewing our faith without works, or not by works, does plainly and abundantly prefer the former; 'Yea, a man may say, thou hast faith, and I have works; shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.' A manifestation of our faith without works, is a manifestation of it in words, whereby a man professes faith. As the apostle says, 'What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith?' Therefore here are two ways of manifesting to others what is in our hearts; one by what we say, and the other by what we do. But the apostle abundantly prefers the latter as the best evidence. Now certainly all accounts we give of ourselves in words,—our saying that we have faith, and that we are converted, and telling the manner how, and the steps by which it was wrought, are still but manifesting our faith by what we say; it is but shewing our faith by our words; which the apos-

teady and persevering. We hear nothing of the prattle of piety, nothing of the religion that floats merely in the head, and bubbles upon the tongue; no, her religion is seen not heard, *it works by love, it purifies the heart, it overcomes the world.* It offers up a grand sacrifice unto God, the body and spirit, affection and substance, youth, beauty, the pleasures and the pride of life. Let me see a single instance of this sort, and I will believe the convert more in earnest, than by exhibiting all the worldly zeal of a thousand polemicks."

tle speaks of as falling vastly short of manifesting of it by what we do, and *shewing our faith by our works*.

“ And as the scripture plainly teaches, that practice is the best evidence of the sincerity of professing christians ; so reason teaches the same thing. Reason shews, that men’s deeds are better and more faithful interpreters of their minds, than their words. The common sense of all mankind, through all ages and nations, teaches them to judge of men’s hearts chiefly by their practice. If a man professes a great deal of love and friendship to another, reason teaches all men, that such a profession is not so great an evidence of his being a real and hearty friend, as his appearing a friend in deeds ; being faithful and constant to his friend in prosperity and adversity, ready to lay out himself, and deny himself, and suffer in his personal interest, to do him a kindness. A wise man will trust to such evidences of the sincerity of friendship, further than a thousand earnest professions and solemn declarations, and most affectionate expressions of friendship in words. And there is equal reason, why practice should also be looked upon as the best evidence of friendship towards Christ. Thus, if we see a man, who, in the course of his life, seems to follow and imitate Christ, and greatly to exert and deny himself for the honour of Christ, and to promote his kingdom and interest in the world ; reason teaches, that this is an evi-

dence of love to Christ, more to be depended on, than if a man only says he has love to Christ, and tells of the inward experiences he has had of love to him, what strong love he felt and how his heart was drawn out in love at such and such a time, when it may be there appears but little imitation of Christ in his behaviour, and he seems backward to do any great matter for him, or put himself out of his way for the promoting of his kingdom. So if a man, in declaring his experiences, tells how he found his heart weaned from the world, and saw the vanity of it, so that all looked as nothing to him, at such and such times, and professes that he gives up all to God; but yet in his practice is violent in pursuing the world, and what he gets he keeps close, is exceeding loth to part with much of it to charitable and pious uses, it comes from him almost like his heart's blood. But there is another professing christian, that says not a great deal, yet in his behaviour appears ready at all times to forsake the world, whenever it stands in the way of his duty, and is free to part with it any time, to promote religion and the good of his fellow-creatures. Reason teaches, that the latter gives for the most credible manifestation of an heart weaned from the world. And if a man appears to walk humbly before God and men; and to be of a conversation that savors of a broken heart, appearing patient and resigned to God under affliction, and meek in his behaviour amongst



men ; this is a better evidence of humiliation, than if a person only tells how great a sense he had of his own unworthiness, how he was brought to lie in the dust, and was quite emptied of himself, and saw himself nothing, &c. &c.\* but yet acts as if he looked upon himself one of the first and best of saints, and by just right the head of all the christians in the town, and is assuming, self-willed, and impatient of the least contradiction or opposition. So (to mention no more instances) if a professor of christianity manifests in his behaviour a pitiful tender spirit towards others in calamity, ready to bear their burdens with them, willing to spend his substance for them, and to suffer many inconveniences in his worldly interest to promote the good of other's souls and bodies ; is not this a more credible manifestation of a spirit of love to men, than only a man's telling what

\* The author of an account of the Greek Church, speaking of a pious people in Russia, says: "They severely condemn such as call themselves sinners, and who by their feigned confessions, seek after a sort of humility which is founded in pride, or who try by confessions, to excuse themselves ; but are not careful to reform their lives."— He also mentions, as transgressors of the first commandment, "Those hypocrites, who on every occasion shew themselves zealous for the name of God, zealous for the faith, the glory and interests of the church ; and who introduce all their speeches with spiritual observations, (which in themselves are praiseworthy,) but who with all this have nothing in view but the indulgence of a spirit of ostentation, or promoting their own interest in all that they do, and whose zeal consist only in words with which their conduct does not in the least agree."

love he felt to others at certain times, how he pitied their souls, how his soul was in travel for them, and how he felt a hearty love and pity to his enemies; when in his behaviour he seems to be of a very selfish spirit, close and niggardly, all for himself, and none for his neighbours, and perhaps envious and contentious. Persons in a pang of affection may think they have a willingness of heart for great things, to do much and to suffer much, and so may profess it very earnestly and confidently, when really their hearts are far from it. Passing affections easily produce words; and words are cheap; and godliness is more easily feigned in words than in actions. Christian practice is a costly laborious thing. The self-denial that is required of christians, and the narrowness of the way that leads to life, does not consist in *words*, but in *practice*. Hypocrites may much more easily be brought to *talk like saints*, than to *act like saints*.

“Thus it is plain, that christian practice is the best sign or manifestation of the true godliness of a professing christian to others. But yet, it must be noted, merely that a professor of christianity is what is commonly called an honest man, and a moral man, (i. e. we have no special transgression or iniquity to charge him with, that might bring a blot on his character,) is no great evidence of the sincerity of his profession. This is not making his light shine before men. This is not that work and labour of love shewed towards Christ’s

name, which gave the apostle such persuasion of the sincerity of the professing Hebrews. It may be so, that we may see nothing in a man, but that he may be a good man; there may appear nothing in his life and conversation inconsistent with his being godly, and yet neither may there be any great positive evidence that he is so. And indeed no external manifestation and outward appearances whatsoever, that are visible to the world, are infallible evidences of grace. The manifestations that have been mentioned, are the best that mankind can have: and they are such as do oblige christians entirely to embrace professors as saints, and love them and rejoice in them as the children of God, and are sufficient to give them as great satisfaction concerning them, as ever is needful to guide them in their conduct, or for any intent and purpose that needs to be answered in this world. But nothing that appears to them in their neighbour, can be sufficient to beget an absolute certainty concerning the state of his soul: for they see not his heart, nor can they see all his external behaviour; for much of it is in secret, and hid from the eye of the world; and it is impossible certainly to determine, how far a man may go in many external appearances and imitations of grace, from other principles. Though undoubtedly, if others could see so much of what belongs to men's practice, as their own consciences may see of

it, it might be an infallible evidence of their state.

“ Having thus considered christian practice as the best evidence of the sincerity of professors to others, I now proceed,

“ *Secondly*, to observe, that the scripture also speaks of christian practice as a distinguishing and sure evidence of grace to persons own consciences; as might be instanced in a variety of passages: such as, ‘ Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.’ ‘ Little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed, and in truth. And hereby shall we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.’ But for the greater clearness in this matter, I would, *first*, shew how christian practice, is to be taken, when the scripture represents it as a sure sign to our own consciences, that we are real christians. And *secondly*, will prove, that this is the chief of all evidences that men can have of their own sincere godliness.

“ 1. I would observe, that we cannot suppose, that when the scripture in this case speaks of good works, good fruit and keeping Christ’s commandments, that it has respect merely to what is external, or the motion and action of the body, without including any thing else, having no respect to any aim or intention of the agent. For consider men’s actions so, and they are no more good works or acts of obedience, than the regular motions of a

clock. The act of the soul, and the exercise of grace, that is exerted in the performance of a good work, is the good work itself, ~~so far~~ as the soul is concerned in it, or ~~so far as it~~ is the soul's good work. For the determinations of the will are indeed our very actions, so far as they are properly ours, as Dr. Doddridge observes. In this practice of the soul, is included the aim and intention of the soul, which is the agent. And if the acts of obedience and good fruits spoken of, be looked upon, not as mere motions of the body, but as acts of the soul; the whole exercise of the spirit of the mind, in the action, must be taken in with the end acted for, and the respect the soul then has to God, &c. otherwise they are no acts of denial of ourselves, or obedience to God, or service done to him, but something else. And thus it is, that obedience, good works, good fruits, &c. are to be taken, when given in scripture as a sure evidence to our own consciences of a true principle of grace; even as including the obedience and practice of the soul, as preceding and governing the actions of the body. When practice is given in scripture as the main evidence of ~~our true~~ christianity to others, then is meant that in our practice which is visible to them, even our outward actions; but when practice is given as a sure evidence of our real christianity to our own consciences, then is meant that in our practice which is visible to our own consciences, even the exertion and exer-

cise of the soul in our actions. And when we are told in scripture that men shall at the last day be judged according to their works, and all shall receive according to the things done in the body ; it is not to be understood only of outward acts ; for if so, why is God so often spoken of as searching the heart and trying the reins, that he may render to every one according to his works ? As it is said, ‘ I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.’

“ 2. I proceed to shew, that christian practice, taken in the sense that has been explained, is the chief of all the evidences of a saving sincerity in religion to the consciences of the professors of it ; much to be preferred to convictions, enlightenings and comforts, or any inward discoveries or exercises of grace whatsoever. The evidence of this appears by the following arguments.

“ Argument I. Reason plainly shows, that those things which put it to the proof what men will actually cleave to and prefer in their practice, when left to follow their own choice and inclinations, are the proper trial what they do really prefer in their hearts. Sincerity in religion, consists in setting God highest in the heart, in choosing him before other things, in having a heart to sell all for Christ, &c. But a man’s actions are the proper trial what a man’s heart prefers. As for instance, when it is so that God and other things come to

stand in competition, God is as it were set before a man on one hand, and his worldly interest or pleasure on the other, (as it often is so in the course of a man's life,) his behaviour in such a case, in actually cleaving to the one and forsaking the other, is the proper trial which he prefers. Sincerity, consists in forsaking all for Christ in heart; but to forsake all for Christ in heart, is the very same thing as to have an heart to forsake all for Christ: but certainly the highest proof to ourselves and others, that we have an heart to forsake all for Christ, is actually doing it when called to it, or so far as called to it. For the main and most proper proof of a man's having an heart to any thing, is his doing of it.

“It is therefore exceeding absurd, and even ridiculous, for any to pretend that they have a good heart, while they live a wicked life, or do not bring forth the fruit of holiness in their practice. For it is proved in fact, that such men do not love God above all. It is foolish to dispute against plain fact and experience. Men that live in ways of sin, and yet flatter themselves that they shall go to heaven, or expect to be received hereafter as holy persons, without a holy life, act as though they expected to make a fool of their judge. But the apostle says; ‘Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.’ As much as to say, ‘Do not deceive yourselves with an expectation of reaping life everlasting hereafter, if

you do not sow to the spirit here; it is in vain to think that God will be made a fool of by you, that he will be shammed and baffled with shadows instead of substance, and with vain pretences, instead of that good fruit which he expects, when the contrary to what you pretend appears plainly in your life, before his face.' Rest assured the great Judge, whose eyes are as a flame of fire, will not be mocked or baffled with any pretences, without a holy life. If in his name men have prophesied and wrought miracles, and have had faith, so that they could remove mountains, and cast out devils; yet if they are workers or practisers of iniquity, they cannot hide their hypocrisy from their Judge: for, 'There is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves.' Would a wise prince suffer himself to be fooled and baffled by a subject, who should pretend that he was a loyal subject, and should tell his prince that he had an entire affection to him, and that at such and such a time he had experience of it, &c. and should come expecting to be accepted and rewarded by his prince, as one of his best friends on that account, though he lived in rebellion against him, following some pretender to his crown? or would a master suffer himself to be shammed and gulled by a servant, that should pretend to great experience of love and honour towards him in his heart, and a great sense of his worthiness and kindness to him, when at the same time he



refused to obey him, and he could get no service done by him?

“Argument II. As reason shews, that those things which occur in the course of life, that put it to the proof whether men will prefer God to other things in practice, are the proper trial of the uprightness and sincerity of their hearts; so the same are represented as the proper trial of the sincerity of professors in the scripture. There we find that such things are called by that very name, trials or temptations, (words as before observed of the same signification.) The things that put it to the proof, whether men will prefer God to other things in practice, are the difficulties of religion, or those things which occur, that make the practice of duty difficult and cross to other principles besides the love of God; because in them, God and other things are both set before men together, for their actual and practical choice; and it comes to this, that we cannot hold to both, but one or the other must be forsaken. And these things are, all over the scripture, called by the name of trials or proofs. And they are called by this name, because hereby professors are tried and proved of what sort they be, whether they be really what they profess and appear to be; and because in them, the reality of a supreme love to God is brought to the test of experiment and fact. They are the proper proofs in which it is truly determined by experience, whether men have a thorough disposition of heart to

cleave to God or no : ‘ And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, whether thou wouldst keep his commandments, or no.’

“ The difficulties of religion are often represented in scripture, as being the trial of professors, in the same manner that the furnace is the proper trial of gold and silver. ‘ Thou, O God, hast proved us : thou hast tried us as silver is tried.’—‘ And I will bring the third part of them through the fire ; and I will refine them as silver is refined; and I will try them as gold is tried.’ So the difficulties of religion are called trials, because they try those that have the profession and appearance of saints, whether they are what they appear to be, real saints. And, from what has now been observed, it is evident, that they are the most proper trial, or proof, of the sincerity of professors : inasmuch as the very meaning of the word trial, as it is ordinarily used in scripture, is the difficulty occurring in the way of a professor’s duty, as the trial or experiment of his sincerity. And, if it be so, that these things are the proper trial, proof, or experiment of the sincerity of professors ; then certainly the result of the trial or experiment, (that is persons behaviour or practice under such trials,) is the proper evidence of their sincerity ; for they are called trials or proofs, only with regard to the result, and because the effect is eminently the proof, or evidence.

But here it is to be observed, that this is the most proper proof and evidence to the conscience of those that are the subjects of these trials. For, when God is said by these things to try men, and prove them, to see what is in their hearts, and whether they will keep his commandments or no ; we are not to understand, that it is for his own information ; (for he needs no trials for his information ; ) but chiefly for their conviction, and to exhibit evidence to their consciences.—Thus, when God is said to prove Israel by the difficulties they met with in the wilderness, and by the difficulties they met with from their enemies in Canaan, to know what was in their hearts, whether they would keep his commandments, or no ; it must be understood, that it was to discover them to themselves, that they might know what was in their own hearts. And we find that Christ, from time to time, made use of such trials or difficulties to convince the consciences of those that pretended friendship to him, and to shew them what they were. This was the method he took with the rich young man, in the gospel. He seemed to shew a great respect to Christ ; he came kneeling to him, and called him good Master, and made a profession of obedience to the commandments ; but Christ tried him, by bidding him go and sell all that he had, and give to the poor, and come and take up his cross and follow him. So he tried another that we read of who made a great profession of respect to

Christ : says he, 'Lord, I will follow thee wheresoever thou goest.' Christ immediately puts his friendship to the proof, by telling him, that the foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, but that the Son of Man had not where to lay his head. (After this we hear no more of his zeal to follow Christ—all hope of worldly honour or gain being taken away.) And thus Christ is wont still to try professed disciples in general, in his providence. For as the fire tries gold, so do these difficulties in religion try or prove the sincerity of professors ; and Christ, in the Revelation, distinguishes true grace from counterfeit by this, that it is *gold tried in the fire*.

"Seeing, therefore, that these are the things that God makes use of to try us, it is undoubtedly the surest way for us to pass a right judgment on ourselves, to try ourselves by the same things : 'For the truest trial of the power of grace, (says Dr. Sibbs,) is in such particular cases as touch us nearest.' The surest way to know our gold, is to look upon it and examine it in God's furnace, where he tries it for that end, that we may see what it is. And if we have a mind to know whether a building stands strong or no, we must look upon it when the wind blows. If we would know whether that which appears in the form of wheat, has the real substance of wheat, or is only chaff, we must observe it when it is winnowed. If we would know whether a staff be strong, or a rotten broken reed, we must

observe it when it is leaned on, and weight is borne upon it. If we would weigh ourselves justly, we must weigh ourselves in God's scales, that he makes use of to weigh us. For these trials, in the course of our practice, are as it were the balances in which our hearts are weighed, or in which Christ and the world, as to the esteem and regard they have in our hearts are weighed, or put into opposite scales, by which there is an opportunity to see which preponderates. When a man is brought to the dividing of paths, Christ being on the right hand, and the world on the left, so that, if he goes to one, he must leave the other, to see which his heart inclines most to, or which preponderates in his heart; this is just the same thing as laying Christ and the world in two opposite scales: and his going to the one, and leaving the other, is just the same thing as the sinking of one scale, and rising of the other. A man's practice, therefore, under the trials of God's providence, are as much the proper experiment and evidence of the superior inclination of his heart, as the motion of the balance, with different weights, in opposite scales, is the proper experiment of the superior weight.

"Flavel speaks of a holy practice under trials, as the greatest evidence of grace. 'No man (says he) can say what he is, whether his graces be true or false, until they be tried and examined by those things, which are to them as fire is to gold.' Again, speaking of great difficulties and sufferings in the way of duty,

wherein a person must actually part with what is dearest of a worldly nature, or with his duty; he says, 'That such sufferings as these will discover the falseness and rottenness of men's hearts, cannot be doubted; if you consider that this is the fire designed by God for this very use and purpose, to separate the gold from the dross. So you will find it, 1 Pet. iv. 12. 'Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial that is to try you,' i. e. the very design and aim of providence in permitting and ordering them, is to try you. Upon this account you will find the hour of persecution, in the Revelation, called the hour of temptation, or probation. For then professors are sifted to the very bran, searched to the very bottom principles. This is 'the day that burns as an oven; and all that do wickedly shall be as stubble.' For, in that day, the predominant interest must appear and be discovered, it can be concealed no longer. 'No man, (saith Christ,) can serve two masters.' A man may serve many masters, if they all command the same thing, or things subordinate to each other; but he cannot serve two masters, if their commands clash and interfere with each other: and such are the commands of Christ and the flesh in a suffering hour:—thus the two interests come in full opposition. And now, have but patience and wait a little, and you will discern which is predominant. A dog follows two men, while they both walk one way, and you know not which of the two is

his master : stay but a little, until their path parts, and then you shall quickly see who is his master : so it is in this case.' In another place, he says, ' Great numbers of persons are deceived and destroyed by trusting to seeming untried grace—If a man's whole estate lay in some precious stone, suppose a rich diamond, how is he concerned to have it thoroughly tried, to see whether it will bear a smart stroke with the hammer, or fly like a Bristol diamond !'—He further adds, ' The promises of salvation are made over to tried grace, to that only that will endure the trial.'

" From all that has been said, I think it to be abundantly manifest, that christian practice (particularly in cases wherein Christ and other things come into actual and immediate competition) is the most proper evidence of the gracious sincerity of professors, to themselves and others, and the chief of all the marks of grace ; the sign of signs, and evidence of evidences ; that which seals and crowns all other signs. Not that there are no other good evidences of a state of grace but this. There may be other exercises of grace, besides these efficient exercises, which the saints may have in their minds, that may be very satisfying to them, but yet this is the chief and most proper evidence. There may be several good evidences that a tree is a fig-tree ; but the highest and most proper evidence of it is, that it actually bears figs. Christian practice is the sign of signs, in this sense, that

it is the great evidence, which confirms and crowns all other signs of godliness. There is no one grace of the spirit of God, but that christian practice is the most proper evidence of the truth of it. As it is with the members of our bodies, and all our utensils, the proper proof of the soundness and goodness of them, is in the use of them : so it is with our graces, (which are given to be used in practice, as much as our hands and feet, or the tools with which we work,) the proper trial and proof of them is in their exercise in practice. Most of the things we use are serviceable to us, and so have their serviceableness proved, in some pressure, straining agitation; or collision. So it is with a bow, an ax, a saw, a cord, a chain, a staff, a foot, a tooth, &c. And they that are so weak, as not to bear the strain or pressure we need to put them to, are good for nothing. So it is with all the virtues of the mind. The proper trial and proof of them, is in being exercised under those temptations and trials that God brings us under, in the course of his providence, and in being put to such service as strains hard upon the principles of nature.— And as the fruit of holy practice is the chief evidence of the truth of grace, so the degree in which experiences have influence on a person's practice, is the surest evidence of the degree of that which is spiritual and divine in his experiences. And whatever pretences persons may make to great discoveries, great love



and joys, they are no further to be regarded than they have influence on their practice.

“ Thus I have endeavoured to represent the evidence there is, that christian practice is the chief of all the signs of saving grace. To this agrees the whole scripture, and the testimony of all who have been inspired in every age of the world. And if people would get into the way of looking chiefly at those things, as an evidence of a truly gracious state, which Christ and his apostles and prophets chiefly insisted on; it would be of manifold happy consequence ; it would above all things, tend to the conviction of deluded hypocrites, and to prevent the delusion of those whose hearts were never brought to a thorough compliance with the strait and narrow way which leads to life; and people would be led to shew their christianity, more by an amiable upright conduct and conversation, than by an abundant and excessive declaring their experiences ; and christians that are intimate friends, would talk together of their experiences and comforts, in a manner better becoming christian humility and modesty, and more to each others profit ; and many occasions of spiritual pride would be cut off ; and so a great door shut against the devil ; and a great many stumbling-blocks against experimental religion would be removed ; and religion would be declared and manifested in such a way that, instead of hardening spectators, and exceedingly pro-

moting infidelity and atheism, would, above all things, tend to convince men that there is a reality in religion, and greatly awaken them, and win them, by convincing their consciences of the importance and excellency of religion. Thus the light of professors would so shine before men, that others, seeing their good works, would glorify their Father which is in heaven."

## CONCLUSION.

I have now done what I have believed to be my duty, in laying down such marks as distinguish persons in a renewed and gracious state, and showing the nature of true religion. This subject has occupied my mind for several years, and I have with much care and deliberation, delivered my own views respecting these things, and with equal care made selections from pious and judicious writers—wishing to bring before the minds of those who are sincere, such a variety of representations as might enable them to discover the more excellent way. In abridging and arranging from others, I have sometimes used a little difference of expression, in order to convey their meaning in fewer words; but in no case, I believe, have I departed from the sense. I have bestowed much pains and labour in preparing this work, yet I am too well acquainted with the present age, not to know that I shall in general be repaid in hatred and ill-will.\* As soon as one begins to act from

\* My anticipations herein, were not incorrect. A letter was written by a professor, to a person who had one of the *Measuring Reed*, advising him to be cautious in lending it, saying: "This Gates, I think, is in a dangerous error, and it is not good to spread his doctrines abroad." A minister, moreover, attacked the same book in his public preaching; while another man, professing christianity, in his zeal burnt up some or the whole of my writings—looking upon them, I suppose, as what might be a *troubler of Israel*. But this is a very feint specimen of what has been before, and may yet again be; for so great was the rage

principle, and seeks to be found faithful; he almost ceases to have a friend. When all other means fail to work upon, some may insinuate, that I write for the sake of gain. Such may be informed, that this is the farthest from the case possible. The present work was offered to several printers in this place, to print on their own account, and have every book for themselves; and whoever will now pay the actual expense of printing it, shall have the whole edition. All I wish is to discharge the duty laid upon me. By means of printing, and giving away, and losing many of the books, I have expended nearly all the six hundred dollars and upwards, I had a few years ago, the most of which I might now have, had I not expended it in this way. But as I seek to do good, and discharge my duty at the loss and expense of all things, I must expect (as

and spite against Wickliff, on account of his faithful testimony, that after he had lain at peace in the ground upwards of 40 years, he was dug up and burned as a heretick, and as one that had done the greatest injury to the church of Christ. How many, indeed, have been tortured, imprisoned and put to death, for hereticks and enemies to the church, when they were the true witnesses of God. The spirit of persecution is only chained or fallen asleep, not destroyed; and as still and quiet as things are now in the world, and have been for some time, prophecy plainly speaks of a time yet to come, in which the faithful will be called to experience peculiar sufferings. The Jews, it must be recollected, had persecuted none for several hundred years before Christ and the apostles appeared, and they condemned persecuting the righteous, as much as we in general do now; but things were soon changed when the testimony of truth came against themselves.

always has been the case) that multitudes will rise up in opposition to the testimony, and prevent its diffusion, as far as it is in their power—Some ministers of a certain persuasion, have not scrupled already to prohibit their members from getting, or circulating any of my writings: and it was made an objection by the same society, against granting licence to a person as a preacher, because he had distributed some of my publications and was considered favourable to my views. These things (which are perhaps but a dawn of what will yet be) seem only exceeded in modern days by what has lately been done in Norway, to a pious few, who have come forward to testify the truth in an evil and degenerate time—as there is not only a severe penalty annexed to circulating or reading their writings, but the principal instrument of a good work, that has been begun in those parts, is also put in prison.—But persecution must come, or the church will never be purified, and I desire I may bear it aright. My duty I must discharge, whatever it may expose me to; and if what I feel required of me to write, can be circulated no other way, I must take them myself from house to house, to be clear in my mind.

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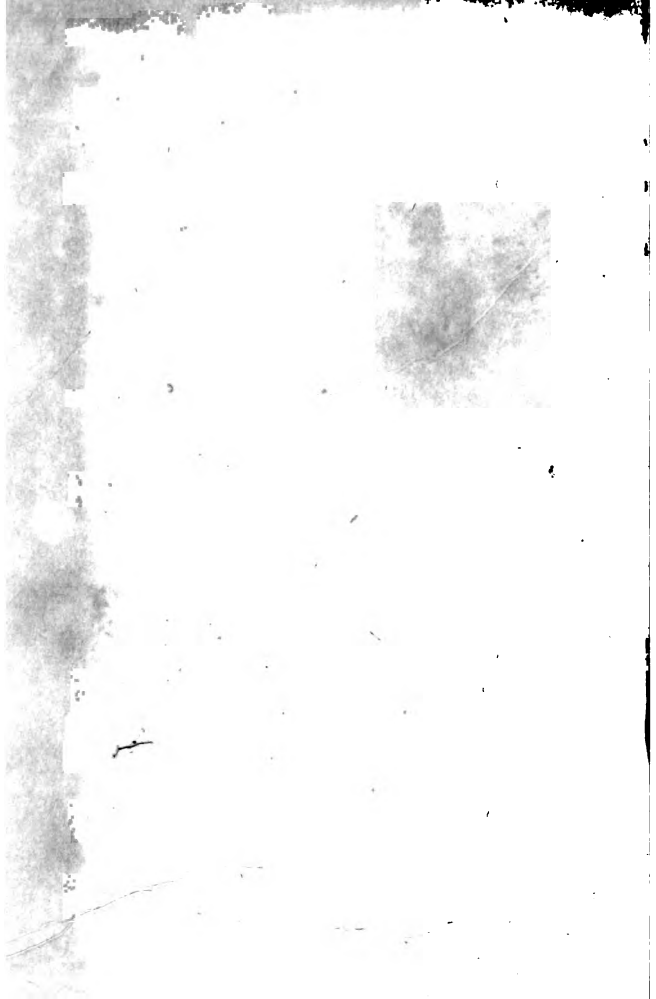


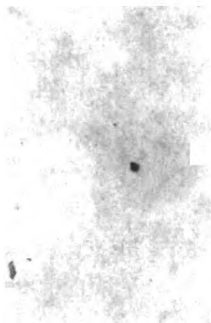






















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